HISTORY OF DARBHANGA RAJ

By

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I

Acquisition of the Darbhanga Raj by the Khandavala Dynasty

The founder of the House of Darbhanga, Mahamahopadhyaya Mahesh Thakur, was a Shrotriya brahman, whose ancestor is said to have come from Mandla in the district of Jabbalpur (M. P.) about the beginning of the 16th Century. It is said that his ancestors originally belonged to Mithila but in the time of Gosain Shankarshan Upadhyaya, who received the grant of village Khandwa (M. P.), some members of the family went to reside there with him. On account of his possession of considerable landed property, the Upadhyaya, like other chiefs of that region, began to be called Thakur, The family of Gosain Shankarshan Upadhyaya thus came to be popularly known as Khandwala Thakurs or Khandwala family. Mm. Mahesh Thakur was, according to Mm. Mukund Jha 'Bakshi", tenth in line of descent from Shankarshan Thakur.[1] His Grand-father, Shripati Thakur, received some favours from the Bharajatiya Rajputs of Mithila and came to settle at Bhawr in the district of Darbhanga. It is since then that the family came to be known as "*Kharaure Bhaur*".

Various traditions are prevalent in Mithila regarding the early life of Mm. Mahesh Thakur and the acquisition of the Raj by him. According to one version Chandra Thakur alias Chan Thakur, had four sons, namely Megha (Bhagirath), Tegha, Damodar and Mahesh. They were all great scholars of their time and their fame soon attracted a large number of students from far and near to their schools at Bhaur.[2] Once they started on a travel along with a learned pupil of Mahesh, named Raghunandan. During the trip they were greatly honoured by the chiefs of Khandwa, Mandala, Ratanpur and Batsar. The name of

1. Jha, Mukund 'Bakshi', Mithila Bhashamaya Itihasa, pp. 11-14.
2. पद्मपत्रमपि यत्र दुर्लभम् रन्धनं भवति नेन्धनं विना ।
श्री भगीरथ गुणेन केवलम् भौर गौरव कथा गरीयसी ।।

the famous Rani Durgabati of Garha Mandla is also taken as one of those initiated in the sacred lore by Mahesh Thakur. There Raghunandan, somehow, incurred the displeasure of the Rani and they left the place. From there they proceeded to Delhi and distinguished themselves in the religious and scholarly debates of the Imperial Court. And the Emperor honoured them by conferring upon them the principality of Mithila. The brothers, it is said, were not willing to accept the grant from a non-Hindu king. But Raghunandan took up the Farman and subsequently presented it to Mahesh Thakur as "*guru dakshina*". But his three brothers are said to have returned to Batsar, Ratanpur and Mandla where they were granted Jagirs. Mahesh Thakur alone returned to Tirhut and settled down after some initial fighting with the Scions of the former rulers of the land.

Another similar tradition, with slight variations, is that while at Batsar Mahesh Thakur received a circular letter issued from the imperial court inviting great scholars to participate in the theological disputations at Delhi. Raghunandan went to Delhi to represent his teacher and distinguished himself there by defeating a learned *Mullah* in the debate. And the great Emperor Akbar in recognition of his vast learning granted him the extensive estate of Tirhut. On his return from Delhi Raghunandan gave away the Raj to his teacher, Mahesh, by way of *guru dakshina*. But Mahesh Thakur would not accept it unless it was endorsed by the Emperor in his favour. So they visited Delhi and with the help of Raja Man Singh got the grant transferred to Mahesh Thakur's name.

Yet in another tradition Mahesh Thakur is represented to have gone to Delhi himself and impressed Raja Man Singh with his great erudition and learning. The Raja became instrumental in introducing him to the emperor who was equally impressed with his versatile genius and intelligence. Mahesh Thakur availed himself of this opportunity of speaking to the emperor about the State of affairs in Tirhut, consequent upon the extinction of the Kameshwar dynasty. Akbar thereupon thought that it would be in keeping with the tradition to entrust the management of the affairs of Tirhut to the hands of some able and learned brahman and he conferred the Raj upon Mahesh Thakur, whom he considered to be eminently suitable.

And still another tradition represents Mahesh Thakur as a priest of the Kameshwar dynasty, who visited Delhi on the collapse of the rule

of his masters and managed to obtain the grant of the ontire Sircar of Tirhut from the imperial court.[3]

The above traditions have been recorded in one form or the other by the writers on the history of Darbhanga Raj. In one of the old accounts, however, we find a somewhat different tradition—sort of a miracle. This tradition is recorded by Francis Buchanan in his Purnea Report.[4] According to this account Mahesh Thakur was a man of great sanctity and learning, His equally famous son, Gopal Thakur, once visitcd Delhi and was to be converted to Islam by emperor Akbar, whereupon his father Mahesh Thakur, sent his favourite disciple, Pandit Roy, to Delhi fore intercession. Surprised at his learning the emperor asked him to teach him some prayer which he refused to do himself on the ground of Shastric injunctions. But he got it recited by a boy by placing his hand on the boy's head. But this whetted the curiosities of the emperor all the more and he ordered the Pandit to recite a portion of the *Harivansa.* This being a sacred book which, according to Hindu religion, should not be recited within the hearing of a non-Hindu, the pandit made extempore translation into the vulgar language and recited it to the emperor. Now the emperor became more exacting when a voice from Heaven commanded him to desist. The emperor became afraid and to make amends he offered the gift of entire estate of Tirhut to Gopal Thakur, who, however, declined to accept. Then it was given to Pandit Roy who also disdained worldly greatness and transferred it to his teacher Mahesh Thakur.

Thus all these traditions agree on rhe point that Mahesh Thakur was the founder of Darbhanga Raj. But difficulty arises as to the nature of the grant. Did Akbar give him an estate or some public appointment? Of all the writers on the subject Shyam Narayan Singh, in his *History of Tirhut*, has discussed the point at length and arrived at the conclusion that

3. The statement that Mahesh Thakur was a priest of the Kameshwar dynasty occurs in Mr. Kerr's Final Report on the Survey and settlement operations in the Darbhanga district. Shyam Narayan Singh in his History of Tirhut criticises it and says that Mahesh Thakur was the priest minister of the Raja of Batsar and not that of the Oinwar rulers of Mithila. But I have also come across a similar statement in a letter of the Collector of Tirhut, dated the 9th November, 1789, to the President and Members of Board of Revenue. It says that "when the race of Rajah Shewah Singh, one of the ancient hereditary Rajahs of Tirhoot, was extinguished, one of the dependants of that (family proheet) Mahish Takoor went to Delhi. By dint of his ability and aptitude he attracted the notice of the emperor Akbar and ultimately the Rajah of Tirhoot with the privilege of collecting the Suddooee which privilege he never enjoyed......" It is just possible that Mr. Kerr also might have based his assumption on this report.

4. Buchanan, F., An Account of the District of Purnea, pp. 506-507.

Mahesh Thakur was conferred upon the absolute possession of the territory over which till some years before the Oinwar Chiefs held their sway.[5] He only paid the tribute and was free so far as the internal administration of the Sarkar was concerned. His arguments are as follows. As, on the occasion of the extinction of the Karnat dynasty, Kameshwar Thakur got the grant of entire Tirhut from Feroz Tughlaq, so also on the dissolution of the Kameshwar dynasty Akbar might have allowed the same system of administration to continue. References to the powers yielded by the rulers of this House in historical works like *Muzaffarnamah*, *Sair-ul-Mutakherin* and *Riazus-Salatin* prove that they enjoyed absolute authority and often refused with impunity the payment of imperial revenues. During the time of decennial and permanent settlement of the district it was found that Raja Madbava Singh was having some sort of ownership over the whole district of Tirhut. The government, of course, settled with him only those lands which were under his direct possession. For the rest, for which he made an infructuous endeavour and whlch was ultimately settled with the other Zamindars, he was given *Malikana* by way of recognition of his being the *Sadar* Zamindar. In the famous Privy Council Judgement of 1785 their Lordships arrived at the conclusion that the Darbhanga Raj was a principality, which they defined as a sovereignty or subordinate sovereignty which in its very nature excluded the idea of division. It was also held that the Raj had its own vassals or tenants and that the whole of the Sarkar of Tirhut was granted to Mahesh Thakur, to whom all the Zamindars in Tirhut were responsible. He alone was responsible to the imperial government. Sachal Mishra's judgement (1795) in the time of Raja Madhava Singh delivered in connection with the sale of a slave is mentioned as an additional point in this regard. As to the argument that there is no mention in the Ain-i-Akbari about the grant of Jagir or Zamindary of Tirhut to Mahesh Thakur Mr. Singh counters it by a negative argument that there is also no mention of the fact as to how the internal administration of Tirhut was carried on during the period. According to Singh it is also not very difficult to understand as to why Mahesh Thakur was granted the Raj of Tirhut. Akbar was a great lover of learning and there is nothing improbable in the tradition that impressed by the Scholastic attainments of Mahesh Thakur he presented to him the Raj.

Long before Shyam Narayan Singh, the nature of the grant to Mahesh Thakur was discussed by Mr. Augustus Prinsep in an article "On

5. Singh, S. N., History of Tirhut, pp. 234-235.

the traces of Feudalism in India".[6] He has particularly taken the conditions existing in two areas of Bihar, namely Chota Nagpur and Tirhut, for his special study in this context. He is also of the view that before the Muslim conquest of Tirhut, the ruler of Tirhut was a sovereign ruler who had a number of fief-holders under him. He thus elaborates his argument. In the Takshim Juma of Ain-i-Akbari he reads the change that was wrought upon the internal administration of Tirhut after the Muslim conquest. Immediately or gradually the Sarkar of Tirhut was divided into seventy-four mahals, the largest being "Tirhoot and dependencees" which is registered at a Jama of 1,307,706 dams. After the defeat of the Raja his territory was divided into seventy-four mahals. He lost sovereignty no doubt but he was not ousted entirely from his possessions. He retained the largest mahal, 'Tirhoot and dependencies'. When the British authority assumed the reins of government the Kanungoe's daftar showed a similar registry with the names of malgujars of each mahal. Only in the case of smaller mahals it was found that they had been further subdivided into a number of Zamindaries. From these facts Mr. Prinsep drew the following conclusion :—

"The Raja remained the possessor of the lands which composed his Khalsah during his own sovereignty, and which now became subject to pay revenue; and the tenures hitherto feudatory to him........ became separate mahals, paying a land tax into the treasury of Delhi, instead of the Kachcheri of Durbhunga...".[7]

The Raja of Tirhut thus fell from the position of a sovereign to that of a Zamindar. Being confirmed in the possession of his Khalsa land he, however, continued to be its proprietor in the real sense of the word. According to Prinsep, that heritage had fallen into the hands of Raja Chhatra Singh, the then incumbent, without a single flaw in the succession, and the proprietory rights of the family had withstood all public changes. The same revolution that reduced the position of the Raja from a sovereign to that of a proprietor, raised the status of his Jagirdars to the same rank. They owed no allegiance to him now. Their new sovereign was content with the fixed portion of the produce and left them the free disposition of their interests or estates.

But we must keep in mind the one great handicap from which all these writers on the subject suffered. They had no access to the primary source of information, and in the absence of which they based their obser-

6. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. 8, 1846.
7. Ibid, pp. 401-402.

vations either on the conditions obtaining in the Raj at the time of their writing or on the suppositions in the light of traditions. They had, of necessity, to draw much upon their imagination to give a convincing story of the origin of the Raj. Fortunately I got an access to the Darbhanga Raj Archives through the kind permission of the Raj authorities.[8] I have come across some original records which throw considerable light upon the subject. The earliest document is a Farman of Emperor Akbar given to Gopal Thakur which runs as follows.

"Let it be known to the exalted officers and economy effecting functionaries, Mutasqddies of Diwani and Karories of Sarkar Tirhut, present and future, that Ajit (Achyuta Thakur ?) obedient to officers, brother of Gopal Das, obedient to Islam, Kanungo and Chaudhari of the above mentioned Sarkar having presented himself in the court...............submitted to the effect that the Kanungoi and Chaudharai of the said Sarkar were assigned to the said Gopal Das, and the said person during the life time of Diwan......performed good service for the betterment of the ryots condition. Therefore, the farman having (the same force of) incontrovertibility as Death had the honour of being brought into existence (issued) that the Chaudharai and Kanungoi of the entire above mentioned Sarkar be restored to the said Gopal Das .....It is expected out of his (sense of) profuse honesty and ability that he will put forth his best endeavours in looking after the interests of Diwani and in protecting the lives of ryots and increasing their prosperity. And if he duly performs the said duty, he should realise from the ryots the Ru um Chaudhrai at 1 tanka (rupee) per bigha and Rusum Kanungoi at one-fourth tanka per bigha, totalling $1\frac{1}{4}$ tankas per bigha.

It is ordered that the Muqaddams, ryots and cultivators residing in the said Sarkar should consider the above mentioned person (without associating anybody else's name with his) as the official Chaudhari and Kanungo and should not go beyond (i.e. act contrary to) his orders and advices which are in accordance with equity and are conducive to the welfare and prosperity (of the ryots) and pay him without interruption the Rusums of Chaudharai and Kanungoi, as of old. They should not consider anyone as sharing these powers with him. They should act as ordered and consider this urgent."[9]

The above quotation makes it abundantly clear that this is a second Farman from the imperial court reinstating Gopal Thakur to the

8. I am very much grateful to the Raj authorities, particularly to Shri Durganand Jha, Assistant Manager, and Prof. Ramanath Jha, Librarian, for extending to me necessary facilities to work in the Raj Archives and Raj Library.

9. Indian Historical Records Commission Proceedings, Vol. XXXVI, pp. 90-91.

Chaudharai and Kanungoi of Sarkar Tirhut. But it raises certain questions. Whether there was any break in the appointment or was it just a renewal of it on some special occasion like the completion of the survey and settlement of the Sarkar by Todarmal and the onforcement of new rules, as happened later on at the time of Decinnial and Permanent Settlement ? But the concluding sentences of the Farman precludes the latter proposition. True, the exact reason of Achyuta Thakur's visiting the imperial court to represent his case is not metioned, but the sentences that "they (the ryots) should not consider anyone sharing these powers with him" and "consider him alone as the official Kanungo" suggest that somebody else had in the meanwhile also appeared on the scene claiming Chaudharai and Kanungoship. We have already mentioned the tradition recorded by Bakshi that after the bestowal of the grant on Mahesh Thakur a scion of the Oinwar dynasty had represented his case in the imperial court and obtained a grant for the waste lands in Tirhut, which led to a series of dispute and Mahesh Thakur in utter disgust, relinquished his appointment. So it is no wonder that the recrudescence of some such opposition in the time of Gopal Thakur also might have led his brother, Achyut Thakur, to repair to the Imperial court to represent his case.

Another document which throws some additional light on the subject is a *Mahazarnamah* of Sundar Thakur. It is not dated but since it takes the narrative to the year 1062 A. H. (1652 A.D.) we may presume that this public statement might have been made not very long after that year. The following is the English translation of the relevant portion of the *Mahazarnamah*.

"......I, the humblest one, Chaudhari Sundar Thakur beseech from the venerable Syeds, Shaikhs, Qazis, Muftis and other persons living in the Parganas of Sarkar Tirhut to testify to the truth of the fact that the Sadar Chaudhari of Sarkar Tirhut, Suba Bihar, and the Kanungoship of the Parganas of Sarkar Tirhut have been obtained by Mahesh Thakur from the court of *Hazarat Jahanpanah* (the refuge of the world). The said Thakur (Mahesh) in accordance with the exalted Farman remained in occupation of the Kanungoship and Chaudharai. The son of Mahesh Thakur also obtained a *farman*, as of old. The said son (Gopal), Ajit (Achyuta) and Parmanand wear real brothers and Subhankar Thakur was (their) step brother (all being sons of Mahesh Thakur). Ajit died issueless. Gopal, Parmanand and Subhankar, the three brothers, shared the Chaudharai and Kanungoship. Subhankar Thakur possesed $\frac{1}{3}$ share of 5 annas 6 gandas out of the proceeds of the full Chaudharai and Kan-

ungoship. He had three wives; from the first he had Purusottam, from the second, Narain and from the third, Raghuram Thakur. His sons continued to hold his 1/3 share. Gunakar Thakur, son of Purusottam Thakur, and Hariram Thakur, son of Raghuram Thakur have sold their shares in the name of Narayan Thakur, my elder brother, and myself on account of (their inability to pay) the arears of Government revenue. We two also continue to possess our own share without anyone else's share in it.

Out of the remaining 2/3 shares one belonged to Gopal Thakur, our uncle and the other to Parmanand, the brother of Gopal. Parmanand died issueless, both (the shares) totalling 10 annas 14 (or 12 ?) gandas developed on Hamanuk (Hemangad) Thakur, son of Gopal. In 1060 A.H. the *Qabuliyat* for the revenue of Tirhut had been tendered by all the three shareholders together in accordance with the order of the then (revenue) officer. Out of the total outstanding Government dues of Rs. 31,500, Rs. 10,500 being the one-third share of we petitioners (Sundar and Narayan) was deposited, and Rs. 21,000/- were due from Lakshman Chaudhari, Ratidhar Thakur, Jageshwar Thakur (son of Hemangad Thakur) who jointly held the 2/3 shares totalling 10 annas 14 gandas. These persons could not make the payment. So they sold their full share of the Chandharai and Kanungoship totalling annas 10 and gandas 14 to me, the petitioner, for Rs. 21,000/- the amount of Government dues in 1062 A.H. and the said amount was deposited by me in the Government (Treasury)".[10]

The *Mahazarnamah* thus confirms the tradition that Mahesh Thakur was the founder of the Darbhanga House. But it is silent about the grant of Jagir to him. What he really received from Akbar was a public appointment. The *Mahazarnamah* mentions that *Sadar Chaudharai* of Tirhut had been conferred upon him, a fact which is omitted in the Farman of Gopal Thakur already quoted. Either of the explanations may be advanced in this connection. Mahesh Thakur was originally given the *Sadar Chaudharai* of Tirhut but owing to reasons like non-payment of government *kists* in time the appointment was reduced to Chaudharai. But it is more likely that the original appointment of Chaudharai might have been upgraded sometime after the grant of Farman to Gopal Thakur.

The *Mahazarnamah* also gives an account of the manner in which the income from this appointment was divided among the various descendants of Mahesh Thakur till the time of Sundar Thakur, when all the

10. Ibid, pp. 92-93.

shares came into one hand by purchase. The occasion for the sale is, however, ambiguously stated. Mahesh Thakur had four sons, of whom Gopal, Achyuta and Parmanand were "real" brothers and Subhankar was their step-brother. It appears that after the death of Achyuta, leaving behind no son, the remaining three brothers divided their ancestral property among themselves. Perhaps Gopal and Parmanand continued to live together even after their separation with Subhankar. Parmanand also died without a son, with the result that Gopal Thakur's son, Hemangad Thakur, got his uncle's share also. This is how Hemangad Thakur's sons possessed two-third shares. In 1060 A. H., in accordance with the orders of the government all the share-holders together took the *Kabuliyat* of Sarkar Tirhut. But they could not pay the government dues of Rs. 31, 500. Of this sum, Rs. 21,000, according to the shares they held, were due with the three sons of Hemangad Thakur who could not make the payment. And finding no way out these three brothers sold their entire share of Chaudharai and Kanungoi for the said dues to Sundar Thakur in 1062 A. H.

But this transaction raises another question. Could a public office be, as such, divided into shares ? Or what the sons of Hemangad Thakur sold was their share in some estate ? We have not come across any reference to the division of a public appointment in the manner of property. But the *Mahazarnamah* clearly mentions the disposal of "Chaudharai and Kanungoship." In this circumstance we may conclude that it was something like a private arrangement among the members of a joint family, who even after their separation continue to derive benefits accruing from a source acquired before separation, according to the shares they hold in the joint property. And this transaction might have been just a private arrangement of the various parties agreeing to surrender their future claims in the commission etc. accruing from the Chaudharai and Kanungoi. The very fact that Sundar Thakur had to take recourse to *Mahazarnamah* (i. e. public statement) is indicative of the above transaction having been nothing more than a private affairs. Moreover, the fact that the *Mahazarnamah* gives the names of sons of Hemangad Thakur as Lakshman Chaudhari, Ratidhar Thakur and Jogeshwar Thakur, we may conclude that "Chaudharai" was in the name of only one brother at a time. Besides, the fact that the three brothers who surrendered their right did not claim anything more than the actual government dues goes to show that they did not actually sell any property but surrendered the right to share in certain benefits.

Now that Sadar Chaudharai and Konungoi had passed into one

hand it naturally led to the accumulation of Capital. Narayan Thakur and Sundar Thakur had already purchased the shares of their step-brothers. They had also received *nankar* grants of Villages from emperor Shah Jahan. During those days the most profitable way to invest the Capital was to invest it in land, because only one-third of the produce was taken as rent from the ryots. Thus it is no wonder that Sundar Thakur might have acquired something like an estate in his own time. In the time of his sons—Mahinath and Narapati—this House came into prominence from the favours it received from the imperial court. It will suffice for our present purpose to state that the grant of 110 paraganas in Subah Bihar and Bengal from Emperor Aurangzeb to Mahinath Thakur together with *Khilat* (robe of honour) and *Mahi Maratib* (Fish insignia) was a definite recognition of the status that the Darbhanga House had come to possess. These grants along with Sadar *Ch udharai* and *Kanungoship* were made hereditary. The acquisition of the status of a Raj also probably led to the inauguration of the practice of succession by the law of primogeniture. In the beginning it was done by the will of the dying ruler and it continued till the English became the master of the country. Now the wills were challenged in the Judicial court but they ended only in confirming the practice and establishing the principle of the indivisibility of the eastate. During the days of the later Mughals when the Central authority became weak, like many other Zamindars of Bihar this House also came to acquire more and more power. It received the first check when Alivardi became the Governor of Bengal (1740-1756). But by then the House had attained such a position that Alivardi himself conferred the title of 'Raja' on the then incumbent of the Raj, Raghava Singh. The strength and power of the Raj can be well imagined from the fact that in the time of Raja Narendra Singh it could defy the authority of government by with-holding the payment of revenue. In a report to the Patna Committee of Revenue, Sitab Rai, the Naib Diwan of Bihar, admits that "since the decline of the empire the feeble goverument of the Nazims has rendered the Zemindars independent......".[11] But this growing power received another shock when the rule of the British East India Company began over this province. Raja Madhava Singh also resisted it but he had to compromise in the end, which surely curtailed much of the powers of this House.

But one question still remains unanswered. Why there has prevailed so persistant a tradition that Mahesh Thaku gotr the Raj of Tirhut when he, as we find, actually received only a public appointment ?

11. Progs. of the Patna Controlling Committee, dt. 4th May, 1772.

Is it in the nature of the appointment? It naturally leads us to the question as to how this appointment was made. We have a very interesting report on this subject by Maharaja Shitab Rai, dated the 4th May 1772. Shitab Rai was directed by the Patna Committee of Revenue to submit an account of the office of *Kanungoi* and *Chaudharai*. After describing in a paragraph the arrangements made by the early Muslim rulers of this country for the internal administration of the conquered Provinces he made the following statement of the change introduced in the time of Akbar.

"When king Akbar came to the throne Raja Todar Mull and Roy Muccund were Officers of the Revenue and Minister of State the following Regulations then took place. Finding the accounts of the Putwarees of the Zemindars little to be depended upon they represented the case to His Majesty and procured the appointment of two in each Parganah from among the most eminent of the Zemindars, diligent in business and attached to the Government to be Chaudharies on the part of the king. Sunnuds, Khellats (special dress) were granted them and in the management of the collection of the Pergunnah the Zemindars and dependents were put under the direction of these Chaudharies.

They also appointed two Kanungoes in each Pargunnah as being Registers that being acquainted with all the transactions, they should examine minutely and regulate the accounts of Putwaries and also keep Registers of them themselves that (no ?) part of the business of the government might be out of order."

If Chaudharies were appointed from among "eminent Zemindars, the post of *Chaudharai* must have been one of dignity and influence in the locality over which the appointment was held. Further Mahesh Thakur should have been a man of some means from before in order to qualify himself for the post or it must have been an usual thing that a man of humble means getting the coveted post owing to the favour of Emperor Akbar. Not only that he was appointed Chaudhari of not one or two Paraganas but that of the entire Sarkar of Tirhut. This suggests that he was appointed Sadar Chaudhari from the very beginning. Moreover, the fact that he got both Chaudharai and Kanungoi (meant ordinarily for two persons) shows that he was really a most favourite person of the emperor. The combination of these two posts must have given him a position of vantage and power to excite the jealousy of his enemies, and hence we have the tradition of his initial troubles in the management of his affairs. The fact that he could tide over the difficulties and the posts continued to

be held by the members of the House without any break provided opportunities for accumulation of extensive properties in the family. Besides, on the extinction of the rule of Oinwars most of the functions performed by the rulers came to be discharged by Mahesh Thakur and his descendants by virtue of the appointment. This might have given origin and currency to the tradition of Mahesh Thakur's having obtained the Raj of Tirhut from emperor Akbar.

Mm. Mahesh Thakur

Much is not known about the early life of Mm. Mahesh Thakur. Like other high caste brahmans of the age he must have been called upon early in his life to prepare himself for leading the life of a learned brahman. At that time his own Village, Bhawr, was a famous seat of learning. His illustrious elder brother had the good fortune of studying under the feet of the great teacher Jayadeva, popularly known as Pakshadhar Mishra.[12] We know that Mahesh Thakur was the youngest among his brothers, and the difference in the age of the eldest and youngest seems to have been considerable, for his teacher, Mm. Suchikar Jha was like his brother a puuil of Mm. Pakshadhar Mishra. We are still not very sure as to when he actually received the appointment of *Chaudharai* and *Kanungoi*. There are some popular verses, of unknown authors, in this connection. According to one couplet he received the Farman in the Saka year 1499 (or 1577 A. D.)[13] and according to another[14] it was on the Ramnavami day that he was honoured by emperor Akbar. Kavivar Chanda Jha in his introduction to the Maithili Ramayan gives the the year of grant as Saka 1478. But this date does not reconcile with the historical fact of the conquest of Bihar by Akbar in 1574. Doubts naturally arise as to how a grant of land or an appointment could have been made by Akbar before that year in this part of the Country. In the absence of the original Farman to Mahesh Thakur it is not possible for us to assign any definite date to this event. The Farman of Gopal Thakur, referred to earlier, might have been of some help in this regard, but due to the obvious mistake about its date (as copied by Dr. Q.Ahmad), we are constrained to leave it to congectures. However, there is no doubt

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12. Jha, Parmeshwar, Mithilatatwavimarsha, p. 4.

13. नव ग्रह वेद वसुंधरा शक में अकबर शाह।
पंडित सुबुध महेश को, किन्ही मिथिला नाह ।।

14. अति पवित्र मंगल करण, राम जनम के दीन।
अकबर तुषित महेश को तिरहुति राजा कीन ।।

that Mahesh Thakur got the appointment by impressing the emperor with his intellectual attainments and that even after his appointment he continued his devotion to learning more than attending to the affairs of government. To celebrate this grand occasion of his life in a befitting manner he, on his return to his native village, is said to have inaugurated a function called the *Dhaut Pariksha*[15] which continued to be celebrated in the family on all auspicious ceremonial occasions.

Mm. Mahesh Thakur is credited with the authorship of a number of books, namely *Darpan*, *Dayasar*, *Tithitatwa Chintamani* and *Atichar*. Accordiug to Bakshi the closing years of his life were not very happy and he retired to Varanashi where he breathed his last.

Gopal Thakur and Achyuta Thakur

Mm. Mahesh Thakur had five sons, of whom the eldest, Ramchandra Thakur, died in his life-time. Of the remaining, Gopal, Achyuta and Parmanand were real brothers and Subhankar was their step-brother. Being the eldest of the surviving sons Gopal Thakur took up the management of government affairs. In the beginning the Bharajatiya Rajputs of the place created some troubles for him. According to an inscription[16] recorded by Shyam Narain Singh these Bharajatia Rajput of Bhawr were a very powerful martial race, "the crown of all Kshtriyas", but on the defeat of their Chief by Achyuta and Gopal they had to evacuate the place. But this appears to have been a very protracted affair and caused the collection of revenue to fall into arrears. According to traditions Gopal Thakur was summoned to Delhi but he sent there his eldest son, Mm. Hemangad Thakur to represent the State of affairs in Tirhut, consequent upon the disturbances of the Bharajatiya Rajputs, and to apply for time to liquidate the arrears. But he failed in impressing upon the authorities and was confined to jail. There in the prison itself he began to work upon some astronomical problems. In the absense of paper and other materials to write upon he was making calculations on

15. According to this practice Pandits participated in the Scholastic disputes before the Maharaja. As a mark of distinction a pair of Dhoti was given to successful Pandits, and, whenever invitation was to be extended to Pandits by the Maharaja of Darbhanga or wealthy persons of Mithila preference was given to the "Dhaut-parikshottirna" (passed in the examination of Dhoti). B. Sahay, in his History of Education in Bihar under the British Rule, says (p. 277), regarding award of Sanskrit Titles in Bihar, that "the highest award is a Dhoti which is coveted by the most distinguished Sanskrit students and is held in higher esteem than even the diplomas of the examination of Government Sanskrit Colleges.

16. Singh, S. N., op. cit., p. 216.

the ground. The prison authorities, apprehensive of his having been attacked with some mental desease, reported the matter to the higher authorities, and eventually the emperor also came to know of it. Hemangad Thakur was brought before the emperor and when asked as to what he was writing upon the ground he said that he had worked out the eclipses for one thousand years to come.[17] The next eclipse occurred according to his calculations and the emperor became so much pleased that he not only released him from the jail but also wrote off the arrears of his father. But this event appears to have had serious reactions on him, for he practically gave up all interest in the Chaudharai affairs thereafter and devoted himself exclusively to learning for the rest of his life

Another important event of Gopal Thakur's time was the famous land survey and Settlement of Todar Mull in or about 1580.[18] But even more far-reaching in its effect on the fortunes of the family was the separation among the brothers after the death of Achyuta Thakur.[19] Gopal Thakur is also traditionally represented to have retired to Varanashi towards the closing years of his life. His old age and split in the family might have led him to the decision of retiring from government services. His younger brother Parmanand Thakur, mentioned as Rajarshi Parmanand in *Mithila Panjies*[20] had apparently no interest in worldly affairs and the office of Chaudharai and Kanungoi, therefore, fell into the hands of Subhankar Thakur, the youngest brother. Rajarshi Parmanand Thakur died issueless.

Subhankar Thakur

Subhankar Thakur passed the early years of his life at Varanashi with his mother. The place offered him great facilities for the cultivation of Shastric knowledge. Soon he became a scholar of some repute and is credited with the authorship of two books namely *Tithinirnaya* and *Shrihastamuktaval*. On an invitation from Hemangad Thakur he is said to have returned from Varanashi. True, Hemangad Thakur had of his own accord relinquished the Chaudharai etc. but there were others who,

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17. The work is known as Rahu Parag Panji, which opens with the following couplet.

खण्डबलाकुलतरणेर्गोपालादापयं गौरी
हेमाङ्गदः सतनुते पञ्जी (!) राहूपरागस्य ॥१॥

18. Blockman's translation of Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. I, p. 352.
19. This is clear from the Mahazarnamah of Sundar Thakur already quoted. Had he been alive at the time of separation the joint family property must have been divided into four shares instead of three.
20. Bakshi, op. cit., p. 100.

for various reasons, were not favourably disposed towards him. According to traditions considerable difficulties were experienced in settling his marriage in good family owing to the not very high social status of his maternal grand-father. He shifted his residential and official headquarters to Bhawra near Madhubani. Bhawra was in the past a stronghold of the Bharajatiya Rajputs. So to consolidate his position Subhankar Thakur might have thought it advisable to make it a place of permanent residence. It is also likely that the place being of some note from before he might have considered it to be more suitable for official headquarters. According to Parmeshwar Jha the reason for this change was the overgrown size of the family of Mahesh Thakur. It is really a credit to him that he could tide over the difficulties. Traditionally he was brave and chivalrous. He founded the township of Subhankarpur near Darbhanga.

Purushottam Thakur.

After the death of Subhankar Thakur his eldest son, Purushottam Thakur, became the Chaudhari of Tirhut. According to S. N. Singh the period of his Chaudharai was from 1571 to 1641.[21] But Mm. Parmeshwar Jha[22] mentions that Purshottam was in office from 1027 F. to 1033 F. (1617-1623). The time given by Singh is definitely wrong in its outer limit because among the papers of Raj Mahafizkhana (Persian Record Room), I have recently come across the English translation of a Farman of Emporor Shahjahan to Narayan Thakur which is dated 1634 A. D. In this Farman he is addressed as Chaudhari Narayan Thakur. During his regime an attempt was made by Raghudeva Mishra, the grand-son of Achyuta Thakur from the daughter side, for a share in the estate. Raghudeva was a great *Naiyayika* and had picked up the art of composing verses from his very Childhood. But he was more famous for his gifted memory. He was called *Shrutidhar*, that is, "one whose memory is such that whatever is heard but once is retained". We know that Achyta Thakur had died without a male issue and the rule of primogeniture had not till then been established in the family. Raghudeva, as the son of his only daughter Kumudini, had naturally a alaim upon the joint family property of his maternal grandfather. Moreover, the fact that Mahesh Thakur, his maternal great grndfather, had gained the favours of Emperor Akbar because of his vast learning might have encouraged him to visit the imperial court and try his luck. We read the following account of his visit in the *Amal-e-Salah.*

21 Singh, S. N., op. cit., p. 217.
22. Jha, P., op. cit., p. 28.

"Two brahmans from Tirhut were presented on the 5th of Safar year II, before the emperor each of whom claimed the power of not only to quote, word for word and in the same arrangement, ten fresh lines of poems in the language of Hindu's composed by 10 poets without having heard them even once before, but also to compose, off hand similar lines and in similar metres and rhymes, so as to constitute replies thereto. When His Majesty made them undergo the test more than once and found their claims justified by facts, he granted them each a robe of honour and a cash reward of Rs. 1000 and permitted them to leave for their houses."[23]

Thus Raghudeva could not succeed in getting any share in the property of his maternal grandfather.

Tradition says that Purushottam Thakur was invited to Kilaghat (Darbhanga) by the Faujdar of Darbhanga and treacherously murdered. His wife went to Delhi to represent her case to the Emperor and succeeded in getting the Faujdar executed. Thereafter she performed the rites of Sati on the bank of the Jamuna at Nigambodh ghat.[24]

Narayan Thakur and Sundar Thakur.

Purushottam Thakur was succeeded by his step-brother Narayan Thakur. Mr. Singh has expressed doubts if Narayan Thakur ever assumed the office of *Chaudhari*.[25] But, besides the Farman of 1634 already referred to above, I have come across English translation of two more Farmans, dated 6th Safar, 1051 A. H. (1641 A. D.) and 9th Safar 1054 (1645 A. D.), conferring *nankar* grants of villages Sarson (Pargana Bhaur) and Bijilpura (Pargana Berai) respectively upon Chaudhari Narayan Thakur. In the grant of 1634 Chaudhari Narayan Thakur is credited with having settled the afairs of Paragana Bharawara. The exact natur of the affairs is, however, not clearly stated. These grants not only prove that Narayan Thakur held the *Chaudharai* but also show that his regime continued upto at least 1645 A. D., contrary to the views generally held regarding Sundar Thakur's assumption of the office from 1641 A. D. Further it is clear from the *Mahazarnamah* of Sundar Thakur that he and Narayan Thakur (both own brothers) purchased the shares

23. Quoted in the Journal of Bihar University (March, 1956) Vol. I., p. 78. According to the author of the article entitled "Shrutidhars" the two brahmans referred to in the quotation one was Raghudeva and the other was his elder brother, Harideva.

24. Bakshi, op. cit., p. 134.

25. Singh, S. N., op. cit., p. 277.

of their step-brothers in the proceeds of the *Chaudharai* and *Kanungoi*. It is just possible that the elder brother was only a nominal incumbent and the younger brother actually managed the affairs of Chaudharai. From the spirit of the *Mahazarnamah* also it apears that Sundar Thakur took a lot of interest in the *Chaudharai* affairis.[26]

Narayan Thakur was succeeded by his brother Sundar Thakur. As with the commencement of his regime so also with its close the generally accepted year of 1668 is wrong. In the Raj Mahafizkhana there are two important documents bearing upon this issue—the first is a Farman of Aurangzeb, dated 14th Rabi II, 9th Juloos (1665 A. D.) in the name of Mahinath Thakur, the son and successor of Sundar Thakur, and the other is a letter, dated 1st Rajab 1077 A.H. (1666A.D.) from emperor Aurangzeb to Laskar Khan, Governor of Bihar. Both the documents refer to the great assistance rendered by Mahinath Thakur to the imperial forces in the reduction of Palamau and Morang. It is known to us that Palamau was conquered in 1661. Had Sundar Thakur been in office at the time the question arises as to why the requisition for forces was made in the name of Mahinath Thakur. We way, therefore, reasonably conclude that Sundar Thakur had ceased to be the *Chaudhari* of Tirhut in 1661, if not before.[27]

Although the tradition of Raghudeva Mishra's visiting Delhi for the restoration of the share of his maternal grandfather to him is placed in the time of Purushottam Thakur, it is not unlikely that some such controversy might have arisen in Sundar Thakur's regime also, necessitating the issue of a *Mahazarnamah*, already quoted, to prove that even the share of Gopal Thakur had been purchased from the legal heirs. As a matter of fact that statement closes with the account as to how the two-third shares (of Gopal Thakur and Parmanand Thakur) came into his hands. The fact that he could tide over these difficulties shows that he was a man of great pluck and imagination. He was the first man who, by purchase or otherwise, brought the entire resources of the family into one hand which not only strengthened his hands in managing the affairs of *Chaudharai* but also paved the way for the establishment of a full-fledged estate in the time of his son and successor, Mahinath Thakur.

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26. The Mahazarnamah states "Gunakar Thakur, son of Purushottam and Hariram Thakur, son of Raghuram Thakur, have sold their shares in the names of Narayan Thakur and myself.........We two also continue to possess our own share in it."
27. I have seen a Farman of 5th of Shaaban 1066 (1657 A. D.) making the nankar grant of village Malangia in the same Paragana to Sundar Chaudhary (Thakur).

Traditions represent Sundar Thakur as a very handsome person.[28] He built a house for himself to the north of Darbhanga town, in the Mohalla which later came to be known as Sundarpur. He is also known for his liberality. He excavated a tank in Bhalpatti (Paragana Raghavapur) called *Sundar Sagar* which is referred to in the "Anand Vijaya Natika" of Ram Kavi, whom he had patronised.[29]

Mahinath Thakur

The regime of Mahinath Thakur, son and successor of Sundar Thakur is an important one in the history of the Darbhanga Raj. It was in his time that the family, due to enormous royal favours, came to possess all the dignity of a big estate. Shortly after his assumption of the office of *Chaudharai* he was called upon by the Faujdar of Darbhanga, Nawab Mirza Khan, to assist the imperial forces in the subjugation of Palamau and Morang. Pratap Rai, the Chero Chief of Palamau, had stopped payment of imperial tributes for sometime. He had also taken advantage of the disturbed times, caused by the war of succession among the sons of Emperor Shah Jahan, in creating troubles in this area and flouting the authority of the Central Government. Aurangzeb, therefore, decided on chastisement. Orders were issued to the Governor of Bihar, Daud Khan, to take immediate measures for conquering Palamau. Accordingly, the expedition started on the 23rd March, 1661 from Patna[30] and by the middle of December of the same year Palamau was conquered after several engagements. Likewise in 1664 two forces were sent from Darbhanga and Gorakhpur to cooperate in chastising the rebel Raja of Morang, a hilly country west of Kutch Bihar and north of the Purnea district. The campaign took time but it ended in success.

We get an idea of the services rendered by Mahinath Thakur in these expeditions from the Farman issued to him on the occasion and also a letter of Emperor Aurangjeb to Laskar Khan, Governor of Bihar. Extracts from these documents are given below :—

"Be it known to the Mutasaddies of Mahals, present and future,

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28. अरविन्द विनन्दित सुन्दर लोचन सुन्दर ठक्कुर सुन्दरता ।
मदनेन समं विधिना तुलिता कलिता मिथिलैक पुरन्दरता ।
तव खण्डवलाकुल मण्डन भूप सदामतिरस्तु मुकुन्दरता ।
नैने नगरे निले कमला पर वारिधि मन्थन मन्दरता ।।

29. Jha, P., op cit, p. 29.

30. Sarkar, J. N., History of Aurangzeb, Vol. 3., p. 34.

Tiyuldars, Zamindars, Officers and Nazims of Mustaquar-ul-Mulk, Bihar and the Paradise-like Province (Jinnat-ul-balad) of Bengal that, since the news of the sincerity and good service of Mahinath Thakur, son of Sundar Thakur, who is obedient to Islam and subservient to (local) officers, in the conquest of the country of Palamau appertaining to Suba Bihar and in the suppression of the Zamindars of Morang along with the late Nawab Mirza Khan, Fauzdar of Darbhanga, has reached the Exalted presence ; therefore, by way of grace and in order to honour (the grantee) the Sadar Zamindari and settlements of Sarkar Farrukhabad alias Monghyr, pertaining to Bihar and the Zamindari of Pargana Haveli, Purnea and Tajpur pertaining to Bengal and the Chaudharai and Kanungoi of Sarkar Tirhut which (last two) belong to the grantee according to the Farman of Hazrat Arsh Ashiyani, together with a khilat and Mahi Maratib are granted in heredity and in accordance with the enclosed endorsement to the said Mahinath Thakur, obedient to Islam"[31]... ... ...

"It had come to Our Exalted notice from the reports of the Waqai Nigar of Subah Bihar that the ill-fated Zamindar of Morang, in his false pride, had been the creator of disturbances. Accordingly the late Mirza Khan, Fauzdar of Darbhanga along with the men of Mahinath Thakur, and his brother Narpati Thakur having displayed, the prowess of their swordsmanship gave a thorough beating to that ill-fated one (Raja of Morang)..................Since this Hindu Brahman (Mahinath) has displayed such valour, I have by an exalted farman granted him the Sadar Zamindari and settlement of Sarkar Tirhut and Zamindari of Pargana Dharampur, Sarkar Monghyr, and conferred upon him a khilat and Mahi Maratib. The valiant khan (Laskar Khan) too, should bestow some consideration upon him which may honour him in the eyes of his neighbours, and send him a letter of approbation assuring him of the permanent enjoyment of the Zamindari so that other subordinates may be spurred to similar good services."[32]

Mahinath Thakur's services to the imperial government were amply rewarded. The endorsement on the farman gives the following details of the areas granted to him.

Province of Bihar :-

Sarkar Tirhut including the Valley of the Mountain (Sub-Himalayan tract on the north).

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31. Indian Historical Records Commission, 19, Prog. Vol. XXXVI, p. 94.
32. Ibid, pp. 96-97.

Zamindari, Milkiat and Settlement of 102 Paraganas.
Settlement of Paragana Dharampur, Sarkar Monghyr. 1 Paragana.

Province of Bengal :-

Sarkar Purnea — 5 Paraganas.
Sarkar Tajpur — 2 Paraganas.

Total — 110 Paraganas.

Besides, he was conferred upon the *Khilats* and *Mahi Maratib* honours which were usually bestowed upon Rajas, chiefs and Mansabdars.

Another important event of his regime, about which traditions still prevail, was his engagement in a fight with Raja Gaj Singh of Simraon.[33] Mahinath Thakur stormed the fort of Sugaon and the Raja who had taken shelter in it, escaped through a window. In a folklore we get a very lively account of the assault on the fort of Sugaon.[34]

Mahinath Thakur was a great patron of Maithili literature, which received even greater encouragement in the time of his successor and younger brother, Narapati Thakur. In their court lived the famous poet Lochan who wrote *Raj Tarangini* and *Naisadh Kavya*.

Mahinath Thakur's reign also witnessed the inauguration of a system of succession to the estate which prevented its dismemberment by division among the heirs. Seeing no prospect of a son, Mahinath Thakur adopted his younger brother, Narapati, as his son and successor by executing a will in his favour. The English translation of the will runs as follows :—

"To Babu Shri Narpati Singh, the abode of all good, (may you live long) may prosperity attend you-blessings.

I, Sriman Mahinath Singh Thakur commandeth—

On account of ill-health, I do not find my strength in me and so I intend to go to and remain at Benaras. I have, therefore, given to you the Raj of Tirhut, the Paragana of Dharampur and all the moveable

33. Accorning to Mm. Parmeshwar Jha, Raja Gaj Singh was the son of Ugrasen Singh, the founder of the Bettiah Raja,

34. धाय मिथिला के महिनाथ सिह महाराज बाज के झपटते सुगाओं पर चढ़ि गयौ ॥१॥
घेरा करि दौड़ि दरवाजे में दरेरा लगै घख लागै मुचीत्यौं आगे आगसी लहरि गयौ ॥२॥
दौड़-दौड़ पैदल कंगुरन में चढ़ि लागै लेहुकी लहरि सो सोति ताल भरि गयौ ॥३॥
कहु ढाल कहु तरकस तलवार डारि तौलौ गज सिह खोलि खिड़की दै निकलि गयौ ॥४॥

and immoveable properties with the *Malikana Dusturi* which you shall enjoy, I have made you my Karta. (Dated the 5th Assarh Sudi 1098 Sal)."[35]

Narapati Thakur

Narapati Thakur succeeded his brother in 1690. He was a man of great valour and showed great feats of swordsmanship on many occasions. He combined in himself the intrepidity of a soldier and the easy comprehension of an able general in the battle field. He led his brother's forces to co-operate with the imperial army in the reduction of Palamau and Morang. His personal bravery on the occasion won for him the genuine admiration of the emperor. To his elder brother he rendered conspicuous services and remained affectionate and loyal to him throughout his life.[36] In fact, what Achyuta Thakur was to his elder brother Gopal, so Narapati appears to have been to Mahinath Thakur. Narapati Thakur's mission to Patna to represent to the Subadar the hostile activities of the Makwanpur Raja bears close resemblance with Achyuta Thakur's visit to Delhi on behalf of his brother. Makwanpur was a petty Chieftainship in the Nepal Tarai. During the confusion that followed on the extinction of the rule of Oinwar dynasty over Mithila the Makwanpur Raja annexed to his territory Tantar and other 23 *Mahals* (small districts) together with Janakpur which formerly belonged to the Raja of Tirhut. For a long time the Zamindars of Tirhut could not effect their restoration. These circumstances were represented to the local Subadar by Narpati Thakur and having received his orders he along with other Zamindars under him "concealing his

35. Raj Darbhanga Records. In the Mahafiz Khana there is a collection of English translation of "Rajgi Sanads" but it does not bear any reference number.

36. The affectionate relationship existing between the two brothers is evident from the following prayer of Mahinath Thakur to the goddess kali for the safety and success of his younger brother in the Morang expedition.

वदन भयान कान शव कुण्डल विकट दशन घन पाँती ।
फूजल केश वेश तुअ के कहजनि नव जलधर काँती ॥१॥
काटल माँथ हाथ अति शोभित तीक्ष्ण खड़ग कर लाई ।
भय निर्भय वर दहिन हाथ लय रहिअ दिगम्बरि माई ॥२॥
पीन पयोधर उपर राजित रूधिर स्रवित मुंड हारा ।
कटि किङ्किणि शव कर करु मण्डित सृक वहु शोणित धारा ॥३॥
वसिअ मशान ध्यान शव उपर योगिनि गण रहु साथे ।
नरपति पति राखिअ जग ईश्वरि करु महिनाथ सनाथे ॥४॥

hostile intention under pretence of a hunting party surprised the Raja of Mucwanpore unawares in Tatritir (?) Purgunnah surrounded and took him prisoner."[37] He was carried to Darbhanga and presented before the Faujdar. His life was spared on his becoming a Mussalman and agreeing to pay an yearly Nazrana (tribute) of Rs. 1200 in elephants to Mahinath Thakur. The tribute was paid till the year 1085 F. (or about 1675 A. D.), when it was discontinued. But afterwards it was increased yearly by force by Nawab Fidai Khan (1692-1702).

Narapati Thakur had already become old and his health was failing. He, therefore, decided to retire to Varanashi. He made over the Raj to his eldest son, Raghava Singh, by executing a will[38] in his favour.

II

State of the Darbhanga Raj during the later Mughals.

Raja Raghva Singh

Raghava Singh succeeded to the ancestral *gadi* in 1701. He was on very happy terms with the Governor of Patna and managed the affairs of his estate very efficiently. The undisturbed state of his Zamindary during the first two decades of his administration added much to the fortunes of the House. About the year 1720 Alivardi Khan conferred upon him the title of Raja.[39] He is said to have acquired the *Mukarari* lease of Sarkar Tirhut at an annual *jama* of one lac of rupees. He also paid an annual *nazarana* of Rs. 50,000 to Raja Dharnidhar, the Nawab's Dewan. But soon a family feud ensued and it is said that Eknath Thakur, grandson of Narayan Thakur, represented to Nawab Alivardi Khan the enormous profit that the Raja of Darbhanga was making owing to the very low assessment of the Sarkar and succeeded in exciting his cupidity,

37. Proceedings of the Patna Council, dated the 30th July, 1771.

38. The Sanad (will) dated the 7th Sawan Sudi 1108 (Sal) runs as follows :—"I am now become old and constantly getting illness more and more, and so I am going to remain in the holy place (Benares). I have given to you the Raj of Tirhut, the Paragana of Dharampur, and all the moveable and immoveable properties with the Malikana Dusturi, you shall enjoy them, and I have given to Babu Sri Sheonandan Singh, Babu Sri Ragho Nandan Singh and Babu Sri Thakur Singh, all your brothers, certain pieces of lands for their maintenance in respect of which documents, with details, have been executed, you shall maintain them, intact."

39. It is commonly believed that the title of Thakur was replaced by Singh first in the time of Raja Raghava Singh. But in the Sanads of Mahinath Thakur and Narapati Thakur, his two immediate predecessors, we find Singh and Thakur both occurring after their names, e.g., Mahinath Singh Thakur add Narapati Singh Thakur.

with the result that an attack was made upon the Raja and considerable property seized. According to Riaz-us-Salatin, however, the immediate cause of the attack was the refractory and turbulent conduct of the Raja of Bhanwarah (Darbhanga).[40] A reference to this event is also made in the undated *mahazarnamah* of Raja Madhava Singh, issued by him in connection with the acquisition of Paragana Bachhaur by this House. It runs as follows :—

"Nawab Mahabat Jang had led an expedition against Raja Raghava Singh in 1140 F. and expelled him out of the country and Sarkar Tirhoot was leased out to some one else. Meanwhile Roop Narain, the Zamindar of Paraganas Bachhaur, Pariharpur, Jabdi and Khund, presented himself to the Nawab and obtained the three said paraganas. After a few months Raja Raghava Singh approached the Nawab through some intermediary chiefs for redressal of his grievances. However, the agents of Raja Raghava Singh eventually recovered the said Sarkar. Roop Narain misappropriated almost all the revenue of the said Paraganas which he had collected and hence vast sums of money was liable to be paid by him.........in default of payment he was confined to the imprisonment. Such being the case he sold the three Paraganas on conditional sale to Mir Ghulam Husain, who was one of the servants of the Nawab, and having received the consideration money paid to the Nawab and got himself released from the imprisonment. Roop Narain could not pay consideration money and was dispossessed of the said Paraganas. Mir Ghulam disposed it of to Bhikhi Thakur, the Agent of Raja Raghava Singh for Rs. 26,000 in 1144 F. He handed these over to Raja Raghava Singh, and......occupancy was obtained through the help of Mir Ghulam."

According to another version Raja Raghava Singh was ordered back to Tirhut as Revenue Collector and a grant of *Sadui* (2 p. c. commission on the collection) was given to him on the condition that he would keep his country in a flourishing State.[41]

Another important event of Raja Raghava Singh's regime was his attack on Makwanpur. We have already referred to the agreement of Makwanpur Raja to pay the annual *Nazarana* in terms of elephant. But later on the agreement was violated and the payment of *nazarana* was stopped. In 1133 F. (about 1726 A. D.) Raja Raghava Singh "went against Bolanund Puddia, Naib (Deputy) of Manick Sein, Raja of Tirriena with a great force and fought him. Bolanund and Dulpat Sein, brother

40. Datta. K. K., Alivardi and his times, p. 14.
41. Singh, History of Tirhut, p. 219.

of Manick Sein, came into Raja Ragoo Singh and settled sum with him agreeing to pay two thousand five hundred rupees increase upon the *nazarana* to be paid also in elephants."[42]

A still more important event of Raja Raghava Singh's reign, which has come down to us in the form of traditions, was the disaffection of Biru Kurmi, an erstwhile servant of him. Biru was appointed by the Raja as his Revenue Collector of Dharampur Paragana. This man soon built a fort there and stopped to pay any revenue. Thereupon the Raja sent a force against him which annihilated the enemy. Biru's son was killed in the battle and his power was crushed.[43]

Traditions also represent the recrudescence of the hostility with the Raja of Bettiah in the time of Raja Raghava Singh. It has already been mentioned that the fort of Sugam conquerred from Gaj Singh had been subsequently exchanged with Babra Paragana, Babra had been given by Mahinath Thakur as presents to the daughter of Raja Bhupa Singh at the time of her marriage, which he had himself arranged with the Babu of Shivahar. But in the time of Dhrub Singh, grandson of Raja Gaj Singh, Babra was wrested from the Babu of Shivahar. Thereupon Raja Raghava Singh sent a force against him under Sardar Khan and forced Dhrub Singh to return the paragana to the Babu of Shivahar.[44]

Raja Raghava Singh built a number of temples dedicated to Lord Shiva, two of which were built near the fort of Bhawara. He had two wives and two sons. Before his death he also executed a will[45] in

42. Progs. of the Patna Council of Revenue, dated 30th July, 1770.

43. We get a somewhat different account of this event in Buchanan's report on Purnea (published by the Bihar Research Society, pp. 507-508). On hearing of the refractory conduct of Biru Sarmat Ali Khan was sent with a force from Delhi. In the first engagement at Saiyudganj the imperial force was worsted, but in the second he, with the assistance of the Raja Raghava Singh's force, gained victory. Raghava Singh was confirmed in the Zamindary and he held the entire paragana until the year 1738 when Nathpur and Gorari were taken away from him and given to the Raja of Purnea.

44. न गहु खग्ग ध्रुव सिंह तोहि उपर यम चढयो,
मिथिलापति सें वैर अवसि दिन दिन तोहि बढयो ।
तें कपूत कुल बधिक येतो राघोवर राजा
अरि दल दलन समर्थ भीम भारत जीमि गाजा ।
कवि कहत राम रे मूढ़ सुनु जे दल प्रचंड भैरो रहत
ठहरे न फौज जाथरिन जब सरदार खाँ ओ तेगा गहत ।

45. The Sanad is dated 5th Sawan Sudi 1146 Sal and contains the following :—
"I have given you the whole Raj of Tirhut, Mukarari and Nankar Villa-

favour of his son, Vishnu Singh. On his death his secondwife performed the rites of Sati.[46]

Raja Vishnu Singh

After Raja Raghava Singh, his eldest son, Vishnu Singh, succeeded to the throne in 1739. He died only after four years of his rule in 1743. Traditions say that he had, along with a small number of his followers, gone on a hunting excursion towards Janakpur. In the Jungle he was struck with an arrow from an unkuown direction. Immediately he was brought back to his capital where he died after sometime. Another tradition represents him as having gone to Janakpur on a pilgrimage. Due to some misunderstanding there arose a quarrel with the ruler of the place in which he was killed. His people, on way back, had to encounter several engagements with the enemy forces. The last engagement in which many people are said to have been killed took place in a mango-grove, near Koilakh, calld *Murkattigachhi.*[47]

Even his last Sanad (or will) dated the 9th Chait Sudi 1150 Sal adopting Narendra Singh as his successor does not refer to any such event. It simply says that "on account of illness I have become very weak. I have, therefore, given you the Raj of Tirhut and Dharampore etc. with the *Malikana Dusturs* pertaining to Raj. You shall possess them. You shall maintain intact the provisions for maintenance of the females made by the late Raja and also those made by myself; I have made you my *Karta* (the performer of the last rite)."

Raja Narendra Singh.

Vishnu Singh was succeeded by his younger brother, Narendra Singh, popularly called the "Warrior Prince".[48] According to traditions he had fought some battle against Alivardi, in which he was greatly helped by the Babu of Narhan. The personal bravery of Raja Narendra Singh and the Babu of Narhan exhibited on the occasion is said to have extorted

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ges, and Dharampur and all the Malikana Dusturs and the Rajgi rights which I enjoy. You shall possess and enjoy the same, you shall maintain intact the assignments. I have made the maintenance of your younger brother Babu Sri Narendra Singh (may he live long) as a Babu and the provisions I have made for the support of his family."

46. Jha, P., op. cit., p. 41.
47. Ibid., p. 53.
48. Kavivar Chandra Jha thus says in his Maithili Ramayan.

नृपति नरेन्द्र सिह भेल जखन । अरि घर कानन पसरल तखन ।।
ताकि-ताकि शत्रुक सङ्घार । कैलन्हि बहुत छात्र व्यवहार ।।

admiration of the Nawab.[49] We do not know if Raja Narendra Singh ever fought against Nawab Alivardi Khan. Only this much is known that while Zainuddin as Governor of Bihar was in mahal Bhawarah (the headquarters of Raja of Tirhut) in 1745, perhaps settling some affairs there, he was written to come down to Murshidabad as patna had been threatened by the rebellious Mustafa Khan.[50] On the whole the Raja was on very good terms with the Nawab.

In the time of Raja Narendra Singh the question of Bachhaur Paragana was again raised in 1157 F. by Roop Narain. We have already discussed as to how this Paragana had passed into the hands of Raja Raghava Singh. When this quarrel arose again, "Raja Narendra Singh proceeded to Murshidabad before the Nawab Mahabat Jang. Roop Narain being dispossessed of the Paragana Bachhaur was present from long before in Murshidabad in the service of the Nawab and waited upon him night and day for several years. When Raja Narendra Singh was in the court of the Nawab, the Nawab told the Raja, 'You are the proprietor of the whole of Sarkar of Tirhoot. Roop Narain has rendered good services and waited upon me regularly. Let the paragana Bachhaur be restored to his favour and give him back his conditional sale which you have in your custody." In reply to this Raja Narendra Singh said "Roopnarain sold the Paragana as conditional sale to the hand of Mir Ghulam Husain who subsequently sold it to me, and having received the consideration money he brought it to his own expenses and the occupancy right of the Paragana has been granted to me by your Excellency. Now it is not at all manageable to return my proprietory right to him. His claim does not legally apply before the court, because the Paragana has been sold to my agent and deed was executed in his favour in the court of your Excellency, and it has been in possesion since the time of my father, the late Raja Raghava Singh". The Nawab became silent on such negotiation and when he proceeded to Rajmahal from Murshidabad on hunting excursion, he invested Raja Narendra Singh there with the robe of honour (Khilat) and granted the Sarkar of Tirhut

कतहु जुद्धि नहिं ऐलाह हारि । अतिशय तेज तनिक तरुआरि ॥

49. एसो महाघोर जोर जङ्ग सुलतानी बीच झुकत वबर जङ्ग सङ्गर करीन्द्र हैं ।
औलिया नबाब नामदार पूछे बार बार ये दोनो कौन लड़त अरिवारण परीन्द्र हैं ।
साहेब सुजान जैनुद्दीन अहमद खाँ सामने भय अर्ज करत कहत कवि चन्द्र हैं ।
ये तो दोन वार केशो साह के अजीत शाह आगे राघो सिंहजी के नवल नरेन्द्र हैं ॥

50. Datta, K. K., op. cit., p. 122.

to him. When the said Raja left Rajmahal for Tirhoot the Nawab again persuaded him to give back the Paragana Bachhaur to Roopnarain at the time of his happy departure. The Raja did not agree to return him the deed of the said Paragana but was obliged due to the urge of Subedar and thus he promised to return the Zamindari of the said Paragana in his favour on condition that Roopnarain should be faithful and loyal to him; if there would be any infidelity against him, he would be excluded from the possession of the said Paragana, and that he had in any case no right over the villages Karahia, Chichari and Jayanagar which belonged to his Milkiat and Nankar.

Then Raja Narendra Singh issued the restoring Sanad in favour of Roopnarain, containing the Zamindari of Paragana Bachhaur was restored to the favour of Roopnarain by the orders of His Excellency and that he should pay the rent for the said Paragana cheerfully. On the other hand, Roopnarain executed a deed of relinquishment (Bazinama) in favour of Raja Narendra Singh as regards the villages of Karahia, Jayanagar and Chichari which were revenue free grants for subsistence, and the property of the said Raja in order that he would never claim the proprietory right over the said villages. Accordingly the Nawab issued a *Parwana* bearing his seal in favour of the Raja restoring the said *Nankar* villages along with the *malikana* right over the whole Sarkar. Thenceforward the said *nankar* villages along with the *malikana* right remained continuously in the possession of Raja Narendra Singh."[51]

Because of his good relationship with the Nawab, Raja Narendra Singh enjoyed a number of privileges. In the proceedings of the Patna Council of Revenue, dated the 11th May, 1778, we read that "on the accessioan of Mahabat Jang to the Subedary of these provinces, this (*Dusturat*) together with some other privileges was confirmed to......... Narendra Singh by a Sanad."[52]

Some troubles, however, appear to have occurred for the Raja when Ram Narain became the Deputy Governor of Bihar in 1752. Ram Narain was a sound financier and astute politician and he arranged for the regular collection of customs and compelled the powerful Zamindars

51. M hazarnamah of Raja Madhava Singh.

52. According to W. W. Hunter (Statistical Account of Tirhut, Vol. XII p 210) it was in 1754 that the above grant was made. The items of Dusturat were Serih dih or 3 s. upon each asl mauza; ek anna or one anna per rupee of each Kabuliyat; Sud or 2 percent interest on the same; and Malikana or 10 per cent upon his own Zamindari.

of Bihar like Chhatradhari Singh, Udwant Singh, Pahalwan Singh etc. to pay arrears of revenue. This brought him into collision with Raja Narendra Singh also, an interesting account of which we get in the "Kandarpighat"[53] of Lal Kavi, the court-poet of the Raja. The following is the description of the battle.

The enemy of Raja Narendra Singh represented to Raja Ram Narain, the Subah of Bihar, that the Raja had "cast aside the rule of government" and was not paying the revenue. Thereupon Faujdar Bhikhari Mahta was directed to take Tirhut under his direct control. Salabat Rai accompanied him. The Faujdar proceeded with a force of five thousand Horse fully armed. Newsbearers informed the Raja about this move of Mahata. Having determined to oppose the enemy Raja Narendra Singh made preparation to meet the enemy force on the bank of the river Balan. On an auspicious day he himself sallied forth.

Bow in hand, he marched from the fort and encamped in the plain of Harina. From there he marched to Rampatti and thence to Achanak. There he heard the beat of kettle-drums and knew that the enemy was near. Soon the armies were in drill-order on both sides of the river. The Raja told Bakshi Gokulnath Jha to proceed to the battle-field and keep his men on the alert, lest the enemy take recourse to some strategem. The Bakshi took Jafar Khan and Hala Rai with him and entered the battle field. Meanwhile Faujdar Mahta managed to cross the river at Gangdwar ghat and by a double march he arrived at the village of Bishunpur. The Raja's spies brought timely information about the move of the Faujdar and he commanded two of his Sardars, Mitrajit and Umrao, to check the advance of the enemy. In a pitched battle on the *Mahastami* (8th day of bright half of Aswin, sacred to goddess Durga) Umrao killed Salabat Rai. The Faujdar, Bhikhari Mahta, escaped narrowly and fled away.

Incidentally we also get a picture of the court of Raja Narendra Singh from the above poem, preparing for the coming event. In the centre sat the Raja. To his south sat the Babus (his relations) and the Prime Minister, to his north the wizards and wise men, to his west the soldiers and near him was the Bakshi. The chief house-servant in gorgeous apparel stood behind him. The chief of the Exchequer who attended on him day and night and who knew about all his jewels, was makIng list of excellent bows and arrows.

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53. The poem is edi ed and published by G. A. Grierson in the Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. LIV, Part I, pp. 16-35.

"In one place a Pandit was supporting his views in discussion, in another the skilled Baidiks were singing the essence of the Vedas. In another astronomers were correcting the time-piece, in another Tantrikas were reading charms and exorcisms, in another great poets were composing hundreds of martial songs, in another panegyrists recited epics, in another Sarb Jan Jha was dictating as if he knew everything, in another people explained dictionaries and rhetoric, in another they discussed Persian verses with learned Maulwis, in another Munshis sat elated with Persian knowledge......"[54]

About the year 1760 Raja Narendra Singh was suddenly taken ill and died issueless.[55] His widow survived for a number of years. She had been granted Jayanagar and some other villages in Paragana Bachhaur, over which there arose a dispute with the Zamindar of Bachhaur who claimed *malikana* right over those villages. At last it was decided that the Rani should pay to him an annual *nazarana* of Rs. 774. She had likewise to pay a *nazarana* of Rs. 1,000 to Raja Murlidhar for her annexation, by force, of certain villages in Paragana Narsingpur Corah. Dutta Ram, Raja Murlidhar's Amil of that Paragana, thus reported to Raja Kheali Ram on this event.

"In the year that Raja Murlidhar got the Jageer he appointed me Amil thereof. I seized the Rani's Nankar villages in consequence of which her servants prepared to engage with mine. Raja Murlidhar receiving intelligence of this sent a force to my assistance with which I dispossessed the Rani's people and in the fray some of them were killed. After this she agreed to pay 1,000 Rupees *nazarana* yearly and the Raja gave

54. Ibid., p. 30.

55. In the Mahafiz Khana of the Darbhanga Raj there is English translation of a Sanad, dated 12 Chait Sudi 1167 purported to have been granted to Pratap Singh by Raja Narendra Singh adopting him his heir to the Raj. The Sanad begins "On account of infirmity in body I gave the whole power (of managements) of the Raj to you; now I have become still more infirm and so I have given you the Raj of Sirkar Tirhut etc."

But the following extract from the proceedings of the Board of Revenue, Patna, dated the 11th November, 1779, containing the views of Mr. Keating, a Member of the Board, casts some doubts as to the genuineness of the above Sanad. "Raja Narendra Singh was taken suddenly ill and grew so bad that he lost the use of his speech. He had never had a son or ever adopted one. A short time before his death Pratap Singh came into his room, when the sickman pointed and shook his head, upon which he was declared duly and legally adopted and inherited all his adopter's property and though he had a brother who was equally related to the deceased and by the laws of the Hindus ought to have shared equally, he by this adoption was deprived of any share."

up the villages, also made her a present of Chargowan of Nankar which she now possesses."[56]

But when this Paragana was farmed to Gourbaksh he began to trouble the Rani under the plea of collecting *nazarana*. The Collector of Tirhut, Mr. Keighly, represented this State of affairs to the Chief of the Patna Council, Mr. George Vansittart, with the result that the annual *nazarana* was fixed at Rs. 1000/- to Gourbaksh who was ordered not to send people to the Rani's villages. The *nazarana* was to be realised through the Collector of Tirhut.[57]

III

State of the Darbhanga Raj during the British Rule.

Raja Pratap Singh

Shortly after his accession to the throne, in 1760, Raja Pratap Singh had to direct his attention towards the northern boarder of his estate, which was exposed to disturbances owing to the ambitious designs of the Gurkhali Raja Prithvinarain to make himself the overlord of Nepal. He had already reduced some of the neighbouring principalities to vassal states and in 1760 proceeded towards Mackwanpur with a strong force. By a strategem he made Trivikram Sen, the grandson of Manik Sen, a prisoner, whereupon his minister Kanak Singh, approached Nawab Mir Qasim for help. Accordingly the Nawab sent an army under Gurgin Khan, which was, however, repulsed with great loss. After some time the Gurkhali Raja stopped the annual tribute. The advance of Prithvinarain and consequent encroachment by the Gurkhas upon the Company's territory became a cause of great anxiety to the British authorities in India. Captain Kinloch was posted on the boarder with a detachment of

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Mr. Young, another Member of the Board, however, analysed the situation more correctly when he expressed surprise at the above mode of adoption and observed "Raja Narendra Singh having no children adopted Pertab Singh, the second son of his uncle's son Eknath Thakur, with the approbation of Raja Ram Narain the then Subah who in consequence sent a Khelat to Pertab Singh. Some time after this Raja Narendra Singh was seized with a contraction in his hands which rendered him incapable of writing and because the laws of the Hindus required that the chief should be perfect in all his....................., he resigned the Raj to Pratab Singh who exercised that office two years previous to the death of Narendra Singh."

It is, however, not clear as to why the above Sanad was not produced before the authorities when the question of succession was so hotly debated.

56. Progs. of the Patna Council of Revenue; dated the 19th December, 1774.

57. Proceedings of the Patna Council of Revenue, dated the 25th January, 1773.

sepoys. In his efforts to drive out the Gurkhas Captain Kinloch advanced into the interior of the mountaineous region but after some initial success he had also to make a hasty retreat, and Prithvinarain again took possession of the country. But Prithvinarain who had yet to conquer Kathmandu and consolidate his position was naturally anxious to come to some terms with the English. And in 1771 he agreed with Raja Pratap Singh to pay the annual tribute of Rs. 12500 in elephants. The tribute was to be paid to the Government (of India) through Raja Pratap Singh. Meanwhile Pursee Khan appeared on the acene. He was "more than a servant of Currum (Karan) Sen, the Mucwany (v) Rajah" and had a force of 1000 strong. He engaged himself in restoring the Tatar Paraganas from Prithvinarain, for which he had already started negotiation with the English. The English also saw the advantage of such a move on the part of Pursee Khan for them. Perhaps it was in this situation that the following letter was addressed to Raja Pratap Singh by the government.

"After the usual customary greetings you were directed yesterday on the 12th Moharram, the 11th year, as per orders of the Revenue chief to send the Government an elephant measuring 12½ cubits in height in exchange for Rs. 12500, the revenue of Paragana Tatar, failing which you would have to pay the cash amount. But today, on the 13th of the above mentioned month you are, under the guidance of the Revenue chief informed that the negotiation is being done with Raja of Gorkhali through the dear friend, Mr. Logan. Now it is very likely that if you will get the elephants for submission and make negotiation with the said Raja in this respect, this would differentiate in the negotiation with the aforesaid person. The aforesaid, Mr............has written here that the Amil of Sarkar Tirhut has removed the Government Thana from Paragana Tatar and is communicating in this respect through him jointly. Hence it is proper for you not to accept the two elephants submitted by the Raja of Gorkhali but to return them to him at once and further neither to communicate with him in connection with the aforesaid Paragana nor to hand over in any respect a document of his own to the servants of the Raja of Gorkhali. In this connection you should be more active."[58]

Raja Pratap Singh's reign is, however, more important in the history of the Raj for the reason that it was in his time that the English East India Company was granted by the Mughal Empepor Shah Alam the *dewany* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and new adjustments followed

58. Darbhanga Raj Records (Mahafiz Khana), Goswara Nos. 1134/36.

in the relationship of the Raj with the Company's Government. We have already noted that in the time of Raja Narendra Singh the estate had assumed all the dignity of a semi-independent Raj. Even in his own time a number of privileges had been confirmed to him by Nawab Mir Qasim.[59] For some years the company did not assume the direct charge of the land revenue administration. In 1770, Raja Pratap Singe was given Mokarari lease of Tirhut by Mr. Vansittart and Raja Sitab Roy, Naib Dewan of Subah Bihar. In the same year Mr. Keighly was appointed Supervisor of Sarkar Tirhut. But the Raja fell into heavy arrears and the Supervisor was directed on the 29th December, 1770, to take over charge of the collections into his own hands. The Raja's *dusturat* was stopped to secure the fulfilment of his engagements. His allowance was fixed at Rs. 1,000 per month which was further reduced to Rs. 800 in March, 1771. This must have been really a new experience for the Raja. Hitherto it was he or his *Amla* who farmed the *Nizamat* lands of his estate. Now he came to be treated just like any other renters.

After Raja Pratap Singh Brindaban made proposals in Jeth or Asarh of 1178 F. (1770-71) for renting Sarkar Tirhut for three years. His proposals were accepted on the condition that he would make good the balances of that year (1178 F.) also. During the period of *Mokarari* lease Raja Pratap Singh had made part of the collections for that year. It included his *dasturat malikana* also. The adjustment of the accounts, therefore, led to much misunderstanding between the Raja and Brindaban.

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59. Dr. R. R., Goswara No 11007. The Parawana of Nawab Mir Qasim runs as follows :—"Revenue agents of the present as well as in time to come of Paraganas of Sarkar Tirhut in the Province of Bihar are hereby informed that it has been obviously proved that the right of Rasumat, Sadoi, Ekkani, Sirdehi, Dastur, Moqaddemi, Malikana and Sair Chowthai for the proprietory villages as well as Dastur Taraf Khas relating to the whole and entire Zamindari of the above mentioned Sarkar has been assigned to Raja Pratap Singh............in capacity of being remote heritage and it has been exclusively exempted from revenue Settlement.................. dated the 25th Jamdiul owal, the lunar month of the 5th Regnal year (of Emperor Shah Alam)

Endorsed with the Statement.

Sadoi, Ekkani, Sirdehi, Dastur Mukaddami, Malikana and Sair Chowthai of the proprietory villages as well as Dastur Taraf khas for the Zamindari of the whole and entire Sarkar of Tirhut have been confirmed as usual to Raja Pratap Singh, the tribunal of heroism with effect from 1172 F. S.

1. Sadoi
2. Fi Rupia Ekkani
3. Sirdehi
4. Dastur Mukaddami
5. Malikana
6. Sair Chowthai.
7. Dostur Taraf Khas.

At last both the parties agreed to arbitration. Mirza Himmat Ali, Raj Himmat Shaw, Zahirulla Beg Khan and Balwant Singh were nominated as arbitrators. According to their award Raja Pratap Singh was found owing a sum of Rs. 7699-2-0 to Brindaban. Mr. Keighly was, accordingly, directed to stop Rs. 500 per month from the Raja's allowance till the entire amount was discharged.[60]

In 1774 Raja Kheali Ram and Mirza Himmat Ali, Amin, were sent to Sarkar Tirhut to investigate into the cause of arrears and to make settlement. Because of the advance of the season Raja Kheali Ram had to make settlement at a lesser Juma. Thereafter he returned to Patna leaving Mirza Himmat Ali behind to do the actual collection work. Shortly after Roy Sangam Lal, the nephew of Roy Mohanlal, made proposals for farming the Sarkar of Tirhut on behalf of his uncle, and agreed to make up the loss of the settlement made by Raja Kheali Ram in five years time. His proposals were accepted. To fulfil the terms of his engagements Roy Sangam Lal fixed an additional anna upon the *Wasil Baki* of the renters and persuaded Raja Pratap Singh to take lease from him. The Raja was prepared to take the settlement on the *jama* fixed by Raja Kheali Ram. Meanwhile Roy Mohan Lal himself visited the district and insisted upon the Raja to take the Settlement for five years. The hesitation of the Raja subjected him to the harsh treatment of the renter. All sorts of indignities were heaped upon him. We read in the proceedings of the Revenue Department that the public disgrace to which he was subjected distressed him so much that he fell ill. He sent for Cauzi Waris Ali, Cauzi Salabat Ray and other principal residents of Darbhanga to acquaint them with the mischievous transaction of the renter and signed the *daul* thereby assenting to the proposal of the renter. His illness taking serious turn Roy Mohan Lal sent a Kabuliyat for Alapur Paragana which was under the personal cultivation of the Raja, and got it signed also by him. A month before his death the Raja sent in the following representation to the chief of the Patna Council of Revenue, dated the 19th June, 1775.[61]

"The distress under which I have for some time laboured is well known to you. My *Nankar* etc. having been resumed except 12,000 Rupees which you have been pleased to allow me annually for my support, and even a part of that is deducted on account of the loss in Paragana Alapur. At this time Roy Mohan Lal frequently sends Mohusils to demand debts

60. Progs of the Patna Council, dated 2nd September, 1773.

61. Progs. of the Patna Council of Revenue. dated the 19th June, 1775.

due to himself and others in contradiction to your orders, whereby the Amils are forbade upon any pretence of authority derived from the Cutchery to send Mohusils or on any other account except to demand the rents, yet on the application of any of my creditors he puts guards over me. I request you will please.........to him to collect what rent may be due but not to send Mohusils on any other pretence whatever."

Impressed with the Raja's representation, the Council sent a Parwana to Roy Mohan Lal directing him not to molest the Raja on any private account and confine himself entirely to the business of collections.

Raja Pratap Singh shifted his headquarters to Darbhanga. It is said that on his way to Kilaghat (Darbhanga) to meet the Nawab he saw auspicious things near the present Rambag area which is depicted in a popular verse.[62]

Raja Pratap Singh was a man of great charitable disposition. He made munificient grants of land to individuals and religious institutions. There was hardly any important *Mahanthana* (monastery) in the estate which was not recepient of his bounty. He gave away the entire village of Jagatpur (Paragana Alapur) to the learned Pandit Bhavaninath Sharma for "teaching and supporting students."[63] Because of his affable nature he was very popular and remained mostly surrounded with all sorts of persons. Among his courtiers Bhavanidatta Mishra of Dhagjari and Nandan Chaudhary of Loha yielded great influence, and so also his office Munshi Baleshwar Prasad. Although the Bakshi was still the official adviser to the Raja, he had been rather relegated. The Company of the sycophants, the aloofness of the family adviser (Bakshi) under a sense of slight, the extremely charitable disposition of the Raja and neglect of personal interest in the affairs of the Raj coupled with the change of time, soon affected adversely the fortunes of the family. His later days were far from happy. He had contracted heavy debts and the government had to intervene for relieving him from the vexatious demands of his creditors. On the 9th July, 1775 Raja Pratap Singh died of ulcerous sore

62. Singh, S N., op. cit., p. 222 f.

63. महाराजाधिराज श्री श्रीमत प्रताप बहुादुर:—वंगदेशाटनान्तराभेकभूपाले दत्तानेक वृत्तितरा स्वीकारक स्मार्ता धर्मज्ञ तर्क मीमांशा वेदान्तालङ्कार कानन पञ्चानन धर्मधीर श्री भवानीनाथ शर्मषु वृत्तिपत्रम ददाति सकल छात्राध्ययन निर्वाहाय सूवे बिहार सरकार पटनाभ्यान्तर्गत तिरभुक्त देशान्तर्गत परगन्ना आलापुर अंतर्गत जगतपुर सारैण्यक ससीमक सकाननक ग्रामस्य श्री विष्णु प्रीति सम्पादनायच यवनायवन साधारण: स्वसपथपूर्वक वृत्तिरक्षणम मेव करिष्यति.... ।

on his neck and breast, leaving behind his mother and three wives, the youngest of whom he had married only three months before his death.

Raja Madhava Singh

On the death of Raja Pratap Singh, his step-brother Madhava Singh was recommended by Roy Mohan Lal, the Renter of Sarkar Tirhut, for succeeding to the estate of Darbhanga as he was the next male heir in the family. To prevent any interruption in the business of collection in that Sarkar, the Council wrote to Madhava Singh, on the 13th July, 1775, to act in the place of his late brother and apply formally for a Sanad from the Governor General in Council to confirm him in the Raj. They, however, desired to be furnished with a list of the members of the late Raja's family. Bhavanidatta Miehra helped him in obtaining the title of Raja with *Khilat*, *Serpech*, *Simeter*, *shawals* and a horse from Roy Sangam Lal, nephew and agent of Roy Mohan Lal. Meanwhile representations were received by the Patna Council from some of the members of the family of the late Raja that no provision had been made for their maintenance by Raja Madhava Singh. They expressed their readiness to appoint a manager to take charge of the Sarkar on terms of Raja Kheali Ram's Settlement if the annual allowance of Rs. 12,000 was allowed to them as in the case of Raja Pratap Singh. Syed Makdum Akbar was, thereupon, directed to make an investigation into the matter and submit a report to the Council.

Syed Makdum Akbar himself visited Tirhut and from enquiries learned that of the three widows, the principal Rani and the mother of the late Raja were amply provided. The Raja's first wife enjoyed a pension of Rs. 1,200 a year, besides the profit of the Bellari *Taluq*. His mother possessed the whole village of Jayapur with its dependencies in Paragana Naredigar. The second and third wives of Raja Pratap Singh were really in distress. They had also grants of some villages but their produce was insufficient for them. Raja Madhava Singh, therefore, assigned to them five more villages in Paragana Gopalpur which yielded a revenue of Rs. 350/- per month and they were reported to be satisfied.[64]

Soon after his assumption of the Raj, Raja Madhava Singh's relation with Roy Mohan Lal became very much strained. We have already seen how Roy Mohan Lal had enhanced the *Jamā* and obliged Raja Pratap Singh to sign the engagement for Alapur; and the subsequent death of the Raja. While Raja Madhava Singh was engaged in the

64. Progs. of the Patna Council of Revenue, dated the 15th and 22nd January, 1776.

performance of the last rites of his brother, the Roy sent Nehal Pathak to his house, who took away all the articles in the late Raja's wardrobe and sold them. But Madhava Singh kept quiet perhaps in the hope of succeeding to the Raj through his help. He also agreed to give an *ekrarnama* for the rent. Roy Mohan Lal deducted Rs. 1500 from his allowance of Rs. 12,000 for arrears of 1182 F (1774 A.D.) and various other balances. Besides, he took a bond from him for Rs. 1100 and obliged him to sign a *Farkhati* (deed of relinquishment) for the above year. Raja Madhava Singh thus very much reduced financially, was unable to pay the *kists* of 1183 F and sent to Patna Madan Thakur and Amar Jha to represent his case. But Roy Mohan Lal somehow came to know of it and by intimidating the Raja obtained a *Razinama* and sent it to the Patna Council of Revenue. It satisfied the Council and no action was taken on the representation of Madan Thakur. Thereafter the Roy began his oppressions on the Raja for the *kists* of 1184. He represented to the Government that the Raja was in arrears of about Rs. 10,000 on account of the *Kharif* harvest and was not agreeable to clear off his dues. He had given away several villages to his relations, brahmans, religious institutions and creditors for which no deductions had been made in the Government register.[65] The Raja was thus liable to pay a sum of Rs. 11,743 on that account. The Raja's contention was that the grant had been made from the rent-free *Brahmottar* and *Shivottar* villages which had been granted to his family from the ancient times. The Roy had made collections much more than were due from his *taluqs*. He, therefore, intended to proceed to Patna personally to acquaint the Government with the correct position of his affairs but he was being prevented from doing so.

Roy Mohan Lal was directed to allow Raja Madhava Singh to come over to Patna. But after sometime the Roy represented that the continued absence of the Raja from his Zamindari had greatly affected his collection work and the Raja had not yet paid his arrears to him. The Patna Council, thereupon, deputed Bahadur Beg, Amin, to proceed to Tirhut and make investigation into the matter. Bahadur Beg in his report brought allegations against Roy Mohan Lal of attempting to bribe him to give a false report and stated in his report that the dues against the Raja was a nominal sum of Rs. 116-5-0. The correctness of the report was challenged by Mohan Lal. The issue excited so much interest in the Patna Council of Revenue that one of the members, Mr. Young,

65. It is said that Raja Madhava Singh had given away over 14,000 bighas of land for Charitable purposes (Mithilank, Mithila Mihir, published in 1936, p. 39).

on his own, prepared a statement of the accounts between the parties, in which the Roy was shown to have collected much more than was due from Raja Madhava Singh. Accordıng to this statement, the Roy owed to the Raja a sum of Rs. 13902-12-0. Meanwhile the chief of the Patna Council had sent Bakhtuar Singh to Tirhut to make a private enquiry into the conduct of Government *Sezawal* and his *naib*. His report was favourable to Roy Mohan Lal in so far as it declared the Raja to be in arrears. But in the report it was also pointed out that in matters of *abwabs* etc. the Raja's claims had not been sufficiently taken into account. While the matters thus stood, the Roy was confined into the Jail for the arrears of 1777 and the Government started negotiations with Raja Madhava Singh for the farming of Sarkar Tirhut. He was finally put in the possession of the district on the 29th October, 1778. But Roy Mohan Lal's machinations continued. The creditors of the late Raja, who had been stopped in 1775 from making any demands on Raja Madhava Singh for the debts of his deceased brother, began to put fresh pressures on the Raja for payment of their money. Roy Sangam Lal, the nephew of Mohan Lal, made obstacles in the collection work by inducing ryots to give up cultivation. Thus in an *arzee* of the Raja we read that consequent upon his taking the lease of Tirhut "Sangam Lal makes the ryots abscond and spreads desolation over the country."[66] The government *Sezawal*, Harchand Roy was, therefore, directed to encourage the ryots for cultivation.

But soon misunderstanding developed between Raja Madhava Singh and the Government for which the Raja should not have been held responsible. Matters came to a head in 1780 over the release and subsequent resumption of the Jagir of Mir Syfulla. On the 4th February, 1779, the Governor-General in Council were pleased to direct the Patna Council to restore the Jagir to thc family of Mir Syfulla. Raja Madhava Singh was accordingly allowed a deduction on that account from the Juma of the year 1186 F. But as the members of Syfulla's family did not take advantage of the Government offer it was revoked in July, 1780. Raja Madhava Singh was directed to resume the Jagir and to pay the original *kist* without any deduction. But the Raja did not agree to pay the *kist* on account of Syfulla's Jagir for 1187 F. His contention was that he had received the government order late and hence he should not be answerable for it. The sum involved on this account was Rs. 4266-6-6, of which he had paid only Rs. 266-10-3. Another point of difference

66. Proceedings of The Patna Council of Revenue, dated the 23rd July, 1778.

was over the revenue of Nagerbusty. The collection in that Paragana had been made in Sicca rupees but deposited in the government Treasury in Sonaut rupees. Hence a sum of Rs. 1469-7-6 was claimed to be due from the Raja on account of *Batta*, which he was reluctant to make good. The Patna Council, in their letter to the Governor-General, dated the 26th October, 1780 sought permission to use force against the Raja and observed as follows :—

"We cannot help observing to you that his (Raja Madhava Singh's) conduct has been uniformly disrespectful to this Board ever since you were pleased to grant him a Mokarari Sanad for the Sarkar of Tirhut and as he still continues to disregard and.........our orders, we find it impossble to enforce obedience unless we were to employ a millitary force, which we are not inclined to do without your express permission. We, therefore, hope that you will favour us with your directions in what manner to proceed against this refractory Zamindar."

And on the 15th December, the Governor-General in Council directed the Chief of the Patna Provincial Council "to insist upon immediate payment of the sum of Rs. 5469-3-9 outstanding against Raja Madhoo Singh, the Zemindar of Tirhut, and if he refuses, to send a military force and apprehend his person".[67]

No action was, however, taken immediately against Raja Madhava Singh. As it was a matter of general complaint that the renters in Bihar were heavily in arrears, Mr. Shore was appointed to make an enquiry into the causes of it. One of the results of this enquiry was that the whole of the province was settled in 1781 with one person, Maharaja Kalyan Singh, for Rs. 29,21,107. In April of the same year Raja Kheali Ram was appointed Naib to Maharaja Kalyan Singh. In the same month a dispute arose regarding the correct amount of *Malikana* and *dasturat* fees which Raja Madhava Singh, as Sadar Zamindar of Tirhut, could collect from the Jagirdars of the district. Three petitions were filed before the Provincial Council, one being from Bhawani Singh, the brother of Maharaja Kalyan Singh. In all these petitions complaints were made against Raja Madhava Singh for his having unjustly raised the *dusturats* during the year the management of Tirhut had been placed in his hands. According to the petitioners the sum collected on this account since the time of Mahabat Jang was about Rs. 22,000 and now it had been raised to Rs. 60,000.[68] On the 9th May,

67. Proceedings of the Patna Provincial Council, dated the 28th December, 1780.

68. Proceedings, Calcutta Council of Revenue, dated the 9th May, 1781. The Three

1781 the Council instituted an enquiry into the *dastur malikana* of Raja Madhava Singh. Bachhaur was found to be the only Paragana in the district in which Madhava Singh did not receive *dasturat.*[69]

In June, Raja Madhava Singh's Vakeel filed a petition before the Committee of Revenue, which runs as follows :—

"The Hon'ble the Governor-General and Council having been pleased to render the settlement of Sircar Tirhut perpetual in the name of Raja Madhoo Singh, they accordingly favoured him with a mokarary sanad and pottah, which he can produce. He has paid his revenue on the above tenure, and there is no balance due from him, as a proof of of which he is possessed of a *farcuttey* signed by the Council at Patna ; for he borrowed the sum of Rs. 28,000 to pay what was due at the end of the month of *Paus*. Now the Raja's country is in charge of Raja Kullian Singh, who having summoned him from his country to Patna, and sent his own aumils into the Zamindary to take possession of the *dustoors* and *russooms* of the Zamindary, has confined him in his house, and set a guard of sepoys over him. The Raja is not permitted to go anywhere, nor is any person allowed to visit him. My employer is likewise possessed of a sanad which the Council was pleased to grant him, for continuing to him the *dustoors* and other *russooms* of the Zamindari according to ancient usage, which have always been fixed and he has constantly received. The whole of the Zamindars receive as a bounty from the English Company these *dustoors* and *russooms* of their respective Zamindaries. *From the commencement of the Company's Government till the present time, no one has experienced injustice like that which has now befallen my employer. The Raja is without balance. He is not in arrears to government nor is he indebted to Raja Kullian Singh that he should be confined.*"[70]

We have not full information about the result of this enquiry. In fact the Patna Council had gone into the question of Raja Madhava Singh's *dastur* even before the Raja's proposal for farming the district had been accepted. On an enquiry from the Governor-General in Council dated the 17th April, 1778 regarding the claims of *dasturat* of Raja Madhava Singh on the Nizamat lands[71] of the district of Tirhut, the Patna Council sent them the following information.

petitioners were Bhawani Sing, Baijnath and Md. Reza Khan, all Jagirdars in Tirhut.

69. Board of Revenue. Proceeding No. 26, dated the 20th March, 1795.

70. Prog. No. 23, Calcutta Council of Revenue, dated the 4th June, 1781.

71. According to the Patna Council the Nizamat Mahal consisted of such lands as

"*Dustooraut* is a perquisite which the Rajahs of Tirhut have constantly enjoyed as Sudder Zemindars or lords paramount of that district for a series of many generations, neither the present Rajah nor any of his servants are able to tell the period when it commenced, but it is supposed to be coeval with the Zamindary itself. It was received by his grand-father Raghoo Sing (Raghava Singh), by his uncle Narendra Singh and by his late brother Pratap Singh till the year 1179 Fussly when it was first detained to make good balance due to Government on the Nizamat lands for the year 1178 F. which succeeded that of the famine."[72]

From a different source it is learnt that in 1188 F (1780 A. D.) Raja Madhava Singh had earned a sum of Rs. 54,524 on account of *dasturat malikana.*[73] But at the time of final settlement of the district with the Raja in 1800, a sum of Rs. 41,282 only was excluded from the annual rent on account of *dasturat malikana.*[74]

While Raja Madhava Singh was being harassed by Maharaja Kalyan Singh, some more troubles were heaped upon him by Mr. Champain, the Judge of Sadar Dewany Adalat at Darbhanga. On trifling complaints peons were sent to his several under-renters and they were put into confinement. From a petition of the Raja it is learned that once, while Bhawanidatta Mishra (his Manager) and he were engaged in lodging a messanger from Mr. Grand, the Collector of Tirhut, the naib Nazir of Dewany Adalat came there with a number of peoms and, despite the Raja's persuasions, Bhawanidatta was forcibly carried away and thrown into prison. The removal of the several renters from their respective paraganas in this way resulted in the suspension of collection

had never been given to individual in Jagir and whose rents had always been collected on account of government.

72. Progs. of the Patna Council of Revenue, dated the 11th May, 1778.

73. Hand, R., Early English Administration in Bihar (1781-85), p. 73. The income from following items made up the above sum of malikana.

	Rs.	Ans.	P.
Sadui at 2 per cent..................	5,788	— 9	— 0
Ekanni at 1 anna per rupee.....	15,296	— 5	— 6
Surraydih or russoom at Rs. 3 per village.................	4998	—11	— 6
Dustoor turrufkhas.................	1500	— 0	— 0
Malikana...	12458	— 6	— 0
On Mokararis......	2937	—14	— 3
Dustoor Makaddam.................	5865	—12	— 6
Dustoor Mohurir.......................	934	— 0	— 6
Sair Surraff and Puskye...........	4749	—13	— 6

74. Singh, S. N., p. 223.

work. In certain cases the renters, to avoid payment of revenue, got themselves collusively confined into the Jail. Mr. Grand also in his letter to the Patna Council, dated the 10th April, 1782, testified to "the use of the Court peon without a writ; the informality of the summons, and the manner in which it is served by number of peons; the evident interference and employing them occasionally; the peculiar hardship every man concerned in the revenue labours under of having Dustaks issued on him in consequence of the most trifling complaints exhibited for real or fictitious debts to appear personally at the court of the Cutcherys in Durbhanga though his residence is ever at so great a distance .. ..The General fear with which the inhabitants are impressed and the authority of the collector and renter being insufficient from the process of the Adalat."[75] Again and again the Raja made importunities to the Government for the release of his renters but to no effect.[76] He had to borrow money on heavy interest from shroffs to pay the government *kists*. On the other hand merchants and creditors were pressing him for payment of their dues. Just then he was called upon by the Dewany Adalat to bear the cost of the establishment of Faujdary thanas in his jurisdiction. The Raja's representation to the government on the occasion very truly reflects his helpless condition. He says "the petitioner is Malguzar of Lakhs of rupees upon a most severe Jama and by reason of this has sustained very great losses. Had he known at the time of entering into his engagements that regulations were to take place he certainly must have stipulated accordingly. Now, in consequence of the late order, the Gentleman of the Adalat gives the petitioner great trouble nor leaves him any leisure, in so much that he cannot attend the Malguzary."[77] Instead of getting favourable consideration, as recommended by the Collector, the Patna Council insisted upon the immediate payment of the heavy arrears by the Raja and observed that they could not "consent to make any allowance to Raja Madhoo Singh, for the Faujdary department, the Regulations of the Hon'ble the Governor-General and Council not admitting such provision to be made in any instance."[78] Meanwhile the issue of the settlement of accounts between Roy Mohan Lal and Raja Madhava Singh again came to the fore. From

75. Prog. No. 17, Calcutta Council of Revenue, dated the 26th August 1782.
76. Prog. No. 10, Calcutta Council of Revenue, dated the 21st November, 1782. Raja Madhava Singh submitted to the Council a list of his Assamies confined in the Adalat Jail and the balance of revenue agaist each of them, totalling Rs. 21,955.
77. Prog. No. 9, Calcutta Council of Revenue, dated the 21st November, 1782.
78. Progs. of the Calcutta Council of Revenue, dated the 21st November, 1782.

the Jail Mohan Lal represented to the Governor-General in Council that the accounts submitted so far either by Government Amin or by Mr. Young were not correct, and, if released from the jail, he would personally proceed to Calcutta to explain to them as to how the amounts under certain heads had been entered twice or thrice. In the representation he also referred to the non-payment of the loan of Mr. Craige taken by Raja Pratap Singh for which he had stood as security. Besides the arrear of revenue from the Raja for Paragana Alapur for 1183 F, Mohan Lal claimed the profit on account of the collections of the year 1186 F, a sum of Rs. 45,000 which, in his opinion, he had been unjustly deprived of by Government by transferring the lease of the Sarkar to the Raja. The Raja's contention was that he did not owe anything to the Roy. The payment of Mr. Craige's loan was dependent upon the continuance of the *Goswarah* lease by Raja Pratap Singh. But as the Raja died in 1182 F and he (Madhava Singh) did not continue the engagement he should not be held responsible for it. Thus representations from both parties to the government continued for a long time. The Patna Council sought the opinion of experts on the several points raised in their representations. Pandits and Maulvis were also summoned to give their opinion on the subject. Witnesses of both parties were summoned and examined by the Members of the Council. At one stage the Council advised the parties to get their dispute settled by arbitration, but the Roy did not agree. From time to time the Government had also appointed its own afficers to settle their dispute but the involvement of several issues like *dasturat*, loans etc. defied any solution. The Patna Council's proceedings of these years very clearly exhibit as to haw the Member's opinions and resolutions varied from day to day. At last is 1783 Mr. Duncan, the Preparer of Reports submitted a very long narrative of the dispute and the Provincial Council once again examined the relevant papers and arrived at the following decision. They felt that Mohan Lal's claims for the arrears of 1184 F were just and Raja Madhava Singh should clear off the dues of Rs. 17219-5-9. The Raja was, however, not held responsible for the debts of Raja Pratap Singh. Mohan Lal's claim for the profit of the year 1186 F. was equally turned down on the ground that it was only on his failure to fulfil the condition of his lease that Government accepted the proposal of Raja Madhava Singh to farm the district.

Another issue which strained the relationship between Raja Madhava Singh and the Government was the imposition of the rent on his *Khamat* or *Khudkast* land which the Raja had set apart for his own cultivation. The question of *Khamat* land arose when Mir Barkatulla took

lease of the Raja's *Milkiet* in the Paraganas of Sarkar Tirhut for the year in 1197 F. He for the first time brought the *Khamat* land under assessment and on the Raja's reluctance to pay this excess revenue it was deducted from his *dasturat Malikana*. On the 20th February, 1792 Mir Barkatullah died. Raja Madhava Singh was asked to farm his own Zamindary but he declined. Thereupon Mr. Routledge, Assistant at Darbhanga, was directed to make a measurement of the Raja's *Khamat* land. What followed the measurement is clear from the following extract from the Arzee of the Raja.

"Mr. Routledge, at the end of the year 1199 F., without any of my Amla being in attendance or present excited a false disturbance concerning the land newly cultivated, jungles, gardens and lands with or without grains and made out a measurement of 1300 Bighas of my *Khamat* land and settled it at the rent of three rupees eight annas per Bigha. I presented an Arzee to the Collector stating that former Rajas had never paid Malguzary on account of *Khamat* lands nor had I, and that no former Governor or English Gentlemen had ever required it either of former Rajas or from me, but that they had always been rent free. The Collector sent the said Arzee to the Members of the Board who ordered that the sum of 4500 Rupees, at the rate of 3 rupees 8 annas per Bigha, should yearly be deducted from my *Dustoor* and *Malikana*. This, Sir, being unable to fulfil, from the year 1201 F. I beg leave to relinquish my claim to the *Khamat* lands and am hopeful that they will be put into the possession of the Assamies and that the sum of 4500 rupees which on account of the *Khamat* is ordered to be deducted from my Dustoorat and Malikana may be paid to me from the Sircar agreeably to the Kists."[79] The Collector of Tirhut, Mr. Arbuthnot, also admitted, in his letter of 5th January, 1794 to the Board of Revenue, that "the lands in general are too highly assessed".

But like other issues it also became a protracted one, for we find in the representation of the Raja in 1799, same thing being recounted with a request to forward it to the Governor-General in Council. The following extract from the Arzee takes the narrative to the period when the authorities were engaged in corresponding with the Raja for the permanent settlement of his Zamindary.

"I have sent many petitions on this subject through the Collectors and also through my Vakeels to the Gentlemen of the Board and had every hope that through their kindness I should have had justice done to

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79. Prog. No. 10, Board of Revenue, dated the 31st January, 1794.

me, but nothing has yet been done and I am weighed down with oppression. In 1200 F. Mr. Bathurst, without my consent or written agreement, deducted from my *dasturat* and *Malikana* the sum of Rs. 4560-8-0. From the aforesaid period I have given in several petitions to the Collectors and also to the Gentlemen of the Board but the Gentlemen aforesaid have done me no justice. From the year 1197 to 1206 F. the gross produce of the *Khamat* lands amounts to Rs. 11410-11-0. Of that sum Rs. 2924-6-0 is my just due on account of *Malikana* and *Dasturat* which leaves a sum of Rs 8486-6-0 being the proceeds of the lands. The amount which is yearly deducted and taken by the Collectors is Rs. 4560-8-0. I am, therefore, hopeful that in conformity to the 11th Section of Regulation III, 1793 you will send this petition to the Governor-General in Council that an order may be sent to pay back to me the sum of Rs. 45405 which from 1197 to 1206 F. has been deducted and taken from my *dasturat* and *Malikana*".[80]

Yet another issue which caused some anxiety to the Raja about this time was the gift of Karam Ali Khan to him. Karam Ali was the son of the famous Afgan Sardar Khan and the son-in-law of Samsher Ali Khan, who had rebelled against Nawab Alivardi Khan in 1748. Karam Ali Khan, sometime before his death, executed a deed of gift of his entire estate[81] to Raja Madhava Singh. On the 10th November, 1795, the Collector of Tirhut informed the Board of Revenue about the death of Karam Ali Khan and directed the Tahsildar of Darbhanga to attach his estate. Raja Madhava Singh applied to the Government for an *amaldastak* for the restoration of the estate to him on the strength of the will of Karam Ali Khan. A case in the meanwhile was instituted by a son of the sister of Karam Ali challenging the genuineness of the deed. The Raja produced before the Court Karam Ali Khan's Arzee to the Collector of Tirhut and other papers expressing his intention of making a gift of his estate to him (Raja Madhava Singh). The Board of Revenue became satisfied with the papers produced by the Raja and directed the Collector of Tirhut, on the 12th January, 1796, to make a settlement of Karam Ali

80. Prog. No. 42, Board of Revenue, dated the 16th August, 1799.

81. The estate consisting of 35 villages actually belonged to Shamsher Ali Khan which had been attached with the Nizamat at the time of his insurrection. It was restored to Karam Ali Khan in 1758 by Nawab Mir Jafar. In adition to the above villages the estate had about 300 bighas of land in Gunjiat which included 12 Mahallas in Darbhanga town. It is interesting to note that the Raj palaces and offices are built on these 12 Mahallas in gifted by Karam Ali Khan. (a) Budhoo Sarai is modern Anand Bag compound; (B) Naragauna; (c) Murad Sherganj is eastern and northern portions of Rambag compound ; (d) Nowagarhi is modern Raj Polo ground ; and Yusufganj is modern Kathal Bari.

Khan's jagir with the Raja on the principles of Decennial settlament. Accordingly, on the 2nd December the settlement was made with the Raja of all the land of which Karam Ali was the real proprietor, and the rest, of which he was only a mokararidar, was settled with other maliks. Nanky Bibi, the sister of Karam Ali, and other living members of the family were given 50 bighas of land and an annual allowance of Rs. 200.

But the nineties of the 18th Century are more important for the great efforts on the part of government to persuade Raja Madhava Singh to take, like other Zamindars, permanent settlement of his estate. The proceedings of the Board of Revenue during these years are full of government's proposals to Raja Madhava Singh and the latter's conditions for acceptance. Even as late as the 26th July, 1799, we find the Collector of Tirhut severely criticising the unhelpful attitude of the Raja. While other Zamindars and taluqdars of Bihar had showed their readiness to enter into agreement Madhava Singh "was nevertheless an exception and not at all disposed to take upon himself trouble or responsibility of any kind, however much they might.........promote his dignity and private advantage."[82] But the Raja had his own grievances, and in an Arzee[83] of his he dwelt at length upon the subject, the unjust and humiliating treatment he had received at the hand of the several Collectors. The following is an extract from his petition :—

"The Villages in my milkiet form a part of the Mokarari Istimarari, I obtained in the year 1186 F. from government under the Company's seal and the signature of the Governor-General, a sanad Mokarari Istimarari for the villages of my own Estates, as well as for all those situated in the different Parganas of Sircar Tirhut and in the Pargana Cusma Nagarbassy at an yearly rent of two lakhs, forty four thousand, forty three Rupees and fourteen annas (Rs. 2,44,043-14). Depending upon thc Validity of the Sanad I set about inviting people to settle in the Sircar and discharged the full Revenue to Government on account of 1186 and 1187, getting receipts for the sum paid in from the Council at Patna.

In 1188 F. Raja Kheali Ram, Naib of Maharaja Kalyan Singh, procured a suspension of my Sanad and by means of the Maharaja's Amla laid waste the whole country afterwards. Seeing no chance of regaining my right on account of the great influence of Raja Kheali Ram I referred to the justice of the Board to right me.

82. Board of Revenue, Prog. No. 45, dated the 6th August, 1799.

83. Board of Revenue, Prog. No. 37, dated the 23rd, August, 1799.

In 1189 F. Mr. Charters came to make the settlement of the whole Subah of Behar. His Amla sent peons and sepoys to carry me to him. On my arrival before him, Mr. Charters desired me to take the management of my estate into my own hands. I, then, stated to him the whole of Raja Kheali Ram's misconduct and added that excepting myself no Mokurraridar in all Subah Behar had been deprived of a Mokarari Istimarari and that mine had been taken from me without the ascription of any reason and concluded with saying that if the Sircar was given up to me, persuant to the tenor of my Sanad of Mokarari Istimarari, I would take it upon those conditions and pay the Revenue accordingly. Mr. Charters did not approve of my proposal but by placing me under a guard extorted from me a Darkhast at a rent higher than the produce of Mokarari. As I was in his power I had no hope for justice but from the Board.

In 1191 F. Mr. John Shore's Amla by purchasing the several plan obtained a five year's settlement on similar terms as the former. As the estate did not yield more than the rent of the Mokarari, a rent exacted from me by force, I had no means of subsisting but upon credit and was reduced to the necessity of borrowing money to the amount of some lakhs of rupees. For the amount of the *Malikana* of my Jageer, I am still a debtor and I have discharged the Revenues of Government to the year 1197 F. by taking up money of Bankers and selling hundred of villages of my *Milkiat* and have faithfully liquidated the whole, obtaining receipts for the same.

In 1197 F. Mr. Bathurst made the collections of Tirhut in person. He took engagements from all other proprietors of the different Perganas of Tirhut for their lands, agreeable to the rate established in 1196 F. by order of the Board. But mislaid by the insinuations of the late Mir Barkatullah, he invalidated my pottahs with the Ryots of Perganas Allapore, etc. (Perganas composed of five Mehals, a very ancient *Milkiet* and Mokarari Istamrari in my family when I had attracted settlers by letting the lands at 2 and 4 annas per Bigha which were entirely distinct from the Mokarari of the villages in the different Perganas of Sircar Tirhut and for which I held separate Pottahs) and having first annulled the Mokarari in immediate opposition to the order of the Board, fixed a rent upon them three times as great and even more than that of 1196 F. raising it to the sum of one lakh thirty four thousand, five hundred and sixty seven rupees, one anna and three pie (Rs. 1,34,567-1-3) for the villages of the Mehals in Mokarari and those I held from Government including the *Malikana* and without making any allowances for the expenses of sebundy etc. and sent

me a perwana to deliver in a Derkhast for that amount, and put over me to expedite its delivery (to ?) Hurdeal Singh.

I immediately gave in a Derkhast amounting eighty five thousand and one hundred and twenty five rupees thirteen annas and one pie (Rs. 85,125-13-1) by which I increased the rate and annas more than I had paid in 1196 F. for the villages of Perganas I rented, and augmented to double the rent of the Mehals in Mokarari Istimarari, exclusive of Malikana and without making any deduction for charges of Sebundy etc.

Mr. Bathurst would not consent by the advice of Mir Barkatulla, his Naib Moktarkar, but dismissed from the Kutchery my Gomastahs and Mohurrirs, who had always been employed on my part, and made Settlements for the villages of my Milkiet with Mir Barkatulla and other Thikadars. Being greatly distressed by the designing conduct of Raja Kheali Ram, and the rigorous treatment of the Amlas of Mr. Charters, of Mr. John Shore and of Mr. Bathurst, I have sent a petition to Government requesting the restoration of the former Mokarari, on the plea of the virtue of the Sanads of Mokarari Istamrari, under the seal of the Company, the signature of the Governor-General and the members of the Council, proposing in case of my deficiency in the payment of the Revenues, they should be realised by selling the mehals of my Zamindary, but that I shall not be liable to dispossession from the Mokarari as long as I discharged the Revenue to Government and further alleging my former punctuality by the receipts of the Council at Patna and expressing my strongest assurance in their undeviating justice. For the above reasons I cannot give in a Derkhast for the villages of my Milkiet. Since they are included in the grant of Mokarari Istimarari, my wish is to hold the whole Sircar conformable to the tenor of the Sanad of Mokarari Istimarari in which my own villages are included."

But the Board did not take any notice of the Raja's arzee and directed the Collector of Tirhut to require the Raja "to state explicitly whether he is willing to engage for the payment of public revenue of his estate at the Jama which may be assessed upon it."[84] The Raja was also adamant and the Collector reported to the Board that the Raja wanted a deduction of Rs. 37,000 "as the certain condition upon which alone he feels willing to enter into engagements......"[85] The result was that the Board considered the Raja's reply for engagement on a sum of Rs. 1,07, 261-9¼ to be "a virtual refusal to engage" and directed the Collector to

84. Board of Revenue, Prog. No. nil, dated the 23rd August, 1799.

85 Board of Revenue, Prog. No. 13, dated the 22nd October, 1799.

make a provisional settlement of the lands under the general instructions which were issued to him on the 10th ultimo."[86] A fresh representation on the part of Raja Madhava Singh, however, brought about a somewhat changed attitude in the Board. In their letter to the Governor-General in Council, dated the 25th January, 1800, they observed that "it does not appear that the Settlement was ever offered to the Raja at any specific Jummah, the Collector having merely called upon him to state whether he was willing to engage for such Jummah as might be assessed on his estate in conformity to Regulation 8 of 1793 the by Section 22 of that Regulation the Collector is in the first instance to determine the amount of the assessment............................Had the Collector offered the settlement to Rajah Madhoo Singh at the Jumma engaged for by the farmers of his Zamindary in the past and preceding years, with the deduction of the Dustoorat and Malikana heretofore paid to him on account of his malguzary lands.........there appears little ground to doubt that he would have acceeded to the settlement so adjusted." They wanted that an understanding should be given to the Raja that if he agreed to take the settlement on a Jama of the previous year (a sum of Rs. 1,68,506) a future and impartial enquiry would be made into his claim to a deduction of Rupees 6,174-1-3 on account of the *mokarari* and *minahi* villages. Raja Madhava Singh agreed and the Secretary to the Board of Revenue communicated, on the 8th April, 1801, the decision of the Board to deliver the possession of the estate to the Raja.

This brings us to a close of the painful episode in the life of Raja Madhava Singh in his relationship with the government of the East India Company. If closely studied it will be seen that the main reason of the misunderstanding between the government and the Raja during these years was the result of the administrative changes. Only two generations before Raja Narendra Singh could defy the authority of the Deputy Governor of Bihar with impunity. The Rajas of Darbhanga had for all practical purposes came to be regarded as the master of the whole Sarkar of Tirhut. They had acquired a number of privileges either on the basis of some imperial farmans or by the right of might. Even some years after the acquisition of the *dewany* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa by the East India Company the Raja of Darbhanga continued to enjoy most of the privileges. It would have certainly appeared a very unusual thing in the eyes of both the Raja and his people when the allowances of Roja Pratap Singh were for the first time stopped to liquidate the balances of his

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86. Ibid.

Mokarari settlement. Latea on it became a regular feature with the government to stop his *malikana dastur* and other allowances for the realisation of government revenues. The prestige of Raja Madhava Singh suffered a great deal when his authority was not only set at naught but his request also could not prevent an ordinary peon of the Adalat from arresting his managers on most flimsy grounds. We have already referred to the episode of Bhawanidatta Mishra's arrest by a court peon. Financially too the Raja suffered much. Most of the perquisites enjoyed since the time of his fore-fathers were stopped. Even in cases of payment it was made after a long vexations procedure. Rents were levied on lands which the family had hitherto enjoyed as revenue-free and in the event of refusal they were resumed. Raja Madhava Singh, who had seen his predecessors as rulers of the land naturally resented his reduced position (of a Zamindar) under the present regime. The new government was not prepared to recognise his former status and the Raja was not willing to content himself with the role assigned to him, and this explains the estrangement of their relationship.

The only other event of Raja Madhava Singh's life which deserves mention is the assertion on the part of the Raja of Bachaur to the *malikana* right over the villages of the Raja in Pargana Bachaur. In 1184 F. Fatehnarain,[87] the son of Raja Roopnarain, submitted a written statement before Ali Qasim Khan, the Amil of Jagir estates, in which he claimed *malikana* right over the villages of Jayanagar, Karahia and Chichari. When it became known to Raja Madhava Singh that Fatehnarain had obtained a Sanad for *malikana* he filed a petition in the court with the result that Ali Qasim Khan was directed to enquire into the matter and restrain Fatehnarain from the possession of the property. The case was finally disposed of in favour of Raja Madhava Singh and he was confirmed in the *malikana* right.

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87. We read the following in the Report of George Arbuthnot, Collector of Tirhut, dated the 5th February, 1795, about Raja Fatehnarain whom he had met in connection with the settlement of his Zamindary. "Raja Fatehnarain is an elderly man but can scarcely be said to be civilised. His habitation is in the heart of a thick jungle out of which he seldom or ever emigrates. I understand he never, more than twice in his life, appeared before any European and when I went to the Paragana it was with the greatest difficulty I could get him to come to me. He declared that neither he nor his family had for generations had any concern with the revenues of his Zamindary, that he could not now enter into engagements, but was hopeful of being confirmed in his ancient rights. He holds 9 Nankar villages; since the year 1161 fasilly under a Sanad of the Nawab Mahabat Jung, the proceeds of which I understand amounts to about 6000 Rupees yearly. He held these

Raja Madhava Singh made extensive grants of land to the brahmanas.[88] It is said that he thus gave away some 14000 bighas of rent-free land. Rambagh palace owes its existence to him. He had several temples built and tanks excavated. He had five sons, the eldest of whom predeceased the father. So towards the close of his life when he went over to Varanasi to pass the rest of his days there he executed the following will in favour of the eldest surviving son, Chhatra Singh·

"After usual blessings. Now a days I often fall ill and so I am going on pilgrimage to Shri Kashi (Benares). I give to you the Sarkar Tirhut Raj and Zemindari and all the properties—cash, grains, elephants and horses etc. You shall all along hold possession of Raj and Zamindari of the aforesaid Sarkar and all goods and Chattels, cash and articles and appropriate the profits which may accrue. Malikana Dasturat of the Khas estates and Zemindari Dasturat of the villages of others, and hold possession of the Nankar and Mokarrari villages, and Lakhraj and Khamat lands and all the Zamindari rights appertaining to the Nizamat Mahals and Jagirs and Altamgas etc. in the pergunnahs in the said Sarkar Tirhut. As regards tha debts of Lala Sri Gopal Lal, Babu Sri Baijnath Sahu, Daroga Sri Reajuddin, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Macreat, Sri Nilkant Aosthi, Sri Brij Lal Sahu, Sri Darbari Lal, Sri Mohanand Mahtha, Sri Bhairob Mahtha and Sri Domun Chowdhary you shall pay them what may be justly due to them under the documents executed by me after deduction of the payments made. You shall realiese the money due from the Government on account of Wasilat for 1207 during which the *ticcadars* made collection according to the Parwana of Mr. Robert Grant and the order of the members of the Council and judgment of Mr. Barton, acting Collector, and also the arrears and bond money due in the mofussil. I have made applications to the Collector, Judge, members of the Board of Revenue and the Hon'ble members of the Council for registration of your name on expunction of my name. Before this I executed Sanads of Babuana grant in respect of pergunnah Jabdi to Maharaj Kumar Babu Sri Kirit Singh, in respect of pergunnah Pariharpur Ragho to Maharaj Kumar Babu Gobind Singh and in respect of Pergunnah

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lands free during the time of the Jageerdar, but as he was equally unsuccessful in getting him to come in since the year 1191 F. he accepted from him as a Nazarana the yearly sum of Rs. 3000...............He did all he could to prevent my making the Settlement and the Ryots instigated by him were to the full as had in Burwarra."

88. The tradition is that if a brahman applied for five bighas of land he used to get just the double of it on the ground that he would not till the land himself and get only half of the proceeds from Bataidars.

Pachahi to Babu Sri Ramapati Singh for their maintenance, and I have also given to each of them two horses and one elephant for riding. The said Maharaj Kumar Babus shall enjoy the profits of the said pergunnahs and Malikana Dasturats ad pay the government revenue to you in respect of the said pergunnahs according to the fixed Sadar Jama and you shall pay the same along with the revenue of the Raj to the government. The said Babus shall behave (?) with you as they ought to do and you shall show them the consideration due to them according to sound policy."[89]

Raja Madhava Singh died on the 12th November, 1807.

Maharaja Chhatra Singh

Maharaja Chhatra Singh ascended on the *Gaddi* in 1807. He was a very able administrator and during his regime of 31 years the Raj made an all-round development. He maintained very good relationship with the British government and retrieved the prestige of the family which had suffered immensely during the time of his two predecessors. Within a few years of his assumption of the *Gaddi* he got an opportunity to elevate his position in the eyes of the British rulers. Owing to sundry causes the Anglo-Napalese war broke out in 1812. During the early phase of the war the English were in a critical situation.[90] The Gurkhas had made encroachments upon the Company's territory at several places. People in the border areas were in a state of panic. All sorts of rumour about the designs and movements of the Gurkhas were prevailing. Major Roughsedge, Commanding Ramgarh Battalion, thus wrote to Lt. Col. Fagan, Adjutant General, on his arrival at Muzaffarpnr, on the 20th November, 1814. "There are some improbable but amongst the natives very generally circulated rumours of the existence of a plot in which the disaffected and dissolute inhabitants in Patna are concerned with concealed bands of Nepaulese to raise an insurrection at Patna, and at Hajipoor during the approaching fair (Sonepur fair). Of course these rumours must be known to the Magistrate and constituted authorities at Patna, and I do not mention them from a belief of their having any foundation, or from a doubt of the officers who are responsible having taken proper measures of precaution but to strengthen (by combining this report with the general belief which prevails here both amongst Europeans and the natives of the determination of the Nepaulese to ravage Tirhoot, so soon as we by entering their country shall in their minds justify the measures) a suggestion I have to submit to your con-

89. The documents is dated the 13th Jeth Sudi 1214 (18th June, 1807),
90. I. H. R. C. Progs. Vol. XXXIV, part II, p. 1.

sideration for the more effectual security of this rich and flourishing part of our Dominions." Major Roughsedge suggested that "all the great Rajahs, such as the Rajah of Betiah, of Durbhangah and of Purnea should be encouraged and permitted to arm for the protection of the Frontier to which their Estates extend."

While Major Bradshow, Commanding troops of North-East Frontier, was himself engaged in making arrangements for the defence of the Terai he placed Major Roughsedge "for the present in charge of the protection of the Zillah of Tirhoot from the possible attempts of the enemy to plunder the district." Major Roughsedge, therefore, called upon the Raja of Darbhanga and other great Malguzars on that frontier to assemble a portion of their dependents in arms in the neighbourhood of the position[91] he was likely to take up. On the 30th November, he wrote to Mr. C. J. Sealy, Magistrate of Tirhut, to exert his influence and authority on these Zamindars to attend to his requisitions. The response was, however, not very encouraging, for we read the following in his letter written from Janakpur to Major Bradshaw on the 8th December, 1814. "Thus with the exception of the Darbhanga family.........I confess my expectations are not sanguine, it evidently appears that we cannot count on assistance of any kind from the worthless Zamindars on this Frontier." This attitude on the part of the local Zamindars was by no means a surprise to him. He was, in fact, quite clear in his mind from the very beginning. What he really wanted from these Zamindars was "their presence and appearance of their followers" which "would have had a beneficial effect on the inhabitants of the Nepaul Terai independently of the resources for obtaining information" owing to "their local knowledge and connections by blood and marriage with their neighbours beyond the Borders." In his letter of the 15th December he (Major Roughsedge) regretted that he had not till then been joined by the followers or people of a single Zamindar in Tirhut. But within the course of a few days he was glad to inform the Collector of Tirhut that he had "received from Rajah Chutter Singh, the Zemindar of Durbhangah Sicca Rs. 9888-4-3."[92] And on the 16th January, 1815, he wrote to the Magistrate of Tirhut as follows :—

"I have the honour to enclose copy of a letter I have received

91. Major Roughsedge thought that the place would be "somewhere in the vicinity of Jayanagar, a village belonging to Rajah Chutter Sing on the Frontier and almost due north of Durbhangah."

92. From Major Roughsedge to H. Parry, Collector of Tirhut, dated camp Ratoo Nuddee the 18th December, 1814.

from Rajah Girderh Narain of Bachoor[93], which affords another proof of the worthlessness, almost amounting to disaflection, of the great landholders in Tirhut, with the single exception of the Rajah of Darbhangah, whose inclinations are laudable.........."

From subsequent letters of Major Roughsedge we learn that Maharaja Chhatra Singh also furnished the army officers with useful timely information about the movement of the enemy. Thus in a letter R. B. Gregory—wrote to Major Roughsedge from Pupri that "while I was at Amlwa (?) a man arrived from the Rajah of Durbhangah who corroborated this statement (of enemy's intention of attacking him) and that a strong body had assembled at Tilliasar, distant about 7 miles from this... ......, The Rajah of Durbhangah also states that their Sardars have received positive orders from Kathmandu to plunder and destroy the villages in the Tirhoot district."

The conspicous services rendered by Raja Chhatra Singh naturally brought him under the favourable notice of the Governor-General. Henceforth they addressed congratulatory letters to each other on important occasions. In May, 1815 the Raja sent a congratulatory letters to Lord Moira on his arrival at Calcutta and success in the Anglo-Nepalese war. On the 23rd September, 1815, in appreciation of his services the title of Maharaja Bahadur was conferred on Raja Chhatra Singh. Even after the close of the Anglo-Nepalese war the Maharaja, on the special request of the judge of Tirhut, posted a body of cavalry at the army headquarters in Champaran, for which he was cordially thanked by the Governor-General in his letter to the Maharaja, dated the 18th August, 1817.

Maharaja Chhatra Singh's regime witnessed the cessation of the old feud existing between the Darbhanga and Bettiah Raj families. The tradition is that Maharaja Anand Kishore of Bettiah and Maharaja Chhatra Singh once accidentally met on their way to the Patanadevi temple of Patna and developed liking for each other. Thereafter they exchanged visits frequently and thus the friendship established continued thenceforth.[94]

Maharaja Chhatra Singh took certain measures to put his finances on a sound foundation. He made large investments in various enterprises, organised either by Indians or foreigners. During his time quite a few

93. The letter of Raja Girdhar Narain could not be traced out among the relevant papers.

94. It is said that Pt. Krishnadatta Jha of Banu Chapra was instrumental in bringing the two Zamindars close to each other.

banks were started in this country on the initiative of the European civil and Military officers. The Indians were often heavy depositors and in some cases leading partners.[95] The enterprising spirit was, however, not confined to banking only. The prospects of Steam and Steam-transport in this respect did not escape the attention of the rich Indians. In 1833 a movement was set on foot in Bengal for the introduction of Steam-transport between India and the United kingdom and also for river navigation inside the Country. Mahraja Chhatra Singh was one of the earliest subscribers to the Steam Fund. On the 17th January, 1834 Mr. C. B. Greenlaw, Secretary to the Commitee of New Bengal Steam Fund, conveyed to the Maharaja the Committee's sincere thanks for his liberal subscription and stated that "the Committee feels assured that such proof of interest taken by the native gentlemen of the several provinces of India in the project will not fail to create a strong interest in England in their favour, showing their desire to cooperate with the Committee in such laudable under taking."[96]

A man of religious temperament Maharaja Chhatra Singh repaired and built temples at various places. He finished the construction of the temple at Saurath which had been started in the time of his father, installed a *Shivalinga* therein and named it "*Madhaveshwar*". Round the temple he built a large *Dharamshala* for the visitors to Saurath Sabha, an annual congregation of the Maithil brahmans for the settlement of marriages. He built another temple at Ahilyasthan, and two more temples in Darbhanga itself. Learning about the virtues and attainments of Mahatma Rohinidatta Gosain[97] of Tarauni he personally went to meet the Mahatma. His social status prevented him from calling upon the Mahatma with his retinue. On the other hand the Mahatma was so old and weak that he could not go out of his cottage. Of course, they exchanged messages through their messangers. The Maharaja was so much impressed with him that at the time of his departure he gave him a grant of land for the maintenance of the hermitage. About the year 1830 Maharaja Chhatra Singh went on a long pilgrimage. Because of certain restrictive *Rahdarv* laws he had to apply to the government for permission to visit some of the holy places of the Hindus. The government instruction

95. Sinha, N. C., Studies in Indo-British Economy Hundred years Ago, p. 24.

96. Datta, K. K., Report of the Regional Records Survey Committee, Bihar, (1948-49). P. 21.

97. One peculiarity with Mahatma Rohinidatta Gosain was that he used to speak in Sanskrit only, but in so simple a language that even an illiterate person could under tand it.

to the Magistrate of Patna on the occasion shows the high esteem in which the Maharaja was held. The government letter runs as follows :—

"Maharaja Chutur Sing having applied and obtained leave of Government to proceed on a pilgrimage to Gaya, Benares and Allahabad in the month of December with between four and five thousand followers I am directed to communicate the intelligence to you and to request that you will take the necessary steps to facilitate his march through your district and preserve order. The Raja will, of course, be treated by you personally with the attention due to his rank in case of his visiting the station of Patna." [98]

Maharaja Chhatra Singh was a great patron of learning. In his Court lived the famous Naiyayika Ratnapani Jha (alias Baburaiya, grandfather of the much more renowned Naiyayika Bachcha Jha of Navani) and Shambhunath Jha. Other equally great pandits of his time, although not attached with his court, were Raghava Jha (of village Tarauni), Chandra datta Jha and Ankhi Jha (of Harinagar) and Nenan Jha (of Pilakhawad). In Buchanan's report on the district of Purnea we read that on the western portion of the district there were "no less than 33 teachers, within a small space.........The number of teachers is owing to the patronage of Rajas of Darbhanga, to whom the greater part of the lands belong......In his estates in Tirhut, however, it is said that there are many teachers of high celebrity.........".[99] Again in the discussion that followed over the selection of sites for the proposed Government Hindu College (1812-1823) in Tirhut[100] the names of Darbhanga and Bhaur figured much owing to the one very great advantage, namely the nearness of the residence of Maharaja Chhatra Singh. The scheme, however, could not materialise.

Maharaja Chhatra Singh had three wives. His eldest son and successor, Maharaja Rudra Singh, was from the second wife. From the first wife he had Babu Basudeo Singh and from the third he had no male

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98. Letter from H. W. Prinsep, Persian Secretary to the Government, to W. H. Tippet, Magistrate of Patna, dated the 28th September, 1829. From a letter discovered after the completion of the article it appears that Maharaja Chhatra Singh had gone on a similar pilgrimage in 1821 also. On that occasion he had been supplied with an escort of one company of Hindu Sepoys by the government. During this trip Gaya had not been included.

99. Buchnan, F., An Account of the District of Purnea in 1809-10, p. 178. (published by the Bihar Research Society).

100. For details please see my thesis (unpublised) for Ph. D. Degree, entitled Education in Bihar (1813-1859), pp. 70-84.

issue. He executed a will[101] towards the close of his life regarding his successor and share of the other members of his family in the estate. The arrangement made by him, however, led to protracted litigation after his death. He died on the 3rd April, 1839, at Hayaghat on his way to some places of pilgrimage.

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101. "I have grown old, and there is no certainty about life. Therefore I give to you the Raj, Zemindari and proprietory right in Sarkar Tirhut and the Zemindari property in Zillah Birnagar and Zillah Bhawanipur, and Zillah Gondwara appertaining to pergunnah Dharampur, Sarkar Monghyr. together with property in cash and assets, household furniture, elephants, horses, etc. and the minahi, nankar, Sarshikan, and mokurari villages revenue free and revenue paying Kamat lands, Ganjes, Malikana dasturat of the Khas milkiat, dasturat of Zemindari receivable from the milkiat of other persons, Nizamat mahals and Jagir mahals and altamga, etc., all Zamindari rights, brick-built and mud-built haveli house, gardens at Nargowna together with houses situate in Khas Darbhanga and the brick-built and mud-built houses and kothi and gardens situate in Mozaffarpur, and the Kothi house and ganj situate at Azimabab, and the garden house at Jhanjharpur and the haveli houses and the garden at Benares and the masnad of the Raj, and sit you on the masnad. You shall continue to own and hold possession of the Raj and the milkiat properties, Zemindari in Tirhut and Monghyr above named, and goods and Chattels and moveable and immoveable properties mentioned above, and you shall pay the government revenue. You shall enjoy all the profits that may accrue, and shall also enjoy all the malikana dasturat and all the rights appertaining to the Raj. You shall liquidate such debts due by me as will be found due under documents after deduction of the amounts paid. The money I have been receiving and the money receivable from the Government together with mufassil dues (torn in the original) as also the amount decreed. My name shall be expunged from the government office, office of the Board, Commissioner, Civil Courts and (torn) Governor-General.

I have executed (torn) separate Mukhtarnamas to effect the mutation and to get this deed registered. So you shall get your name entered in the Collector's office on expunction of my name. In all the cases and appeals brought by me against other and those brought by other against me, which are pending in the civil courts in the District of Tirhut, Ujain (Sic), Bhagalpur and in Sudder Dewani Adawlat at Calcutta and other offices. You shall engage pleaders and mukhtars on your behalf and look after those cases and appeals. I have given pergunnah Jarail (torn) to Maharaja Kumar Sri Babu........(torn) for his maintenance as Babu and 4 horses and 2 elephants for use as conveyance. The said Raj Kumar Babu shall appropriate the malikana dasturat and the profits of the said pergunnah and shall pay to you the government revenue, and you shall pay the same to the Government along with the govenment revenue of the Raj. You shall allow such haveli house as are occupied by the said Babu Raj Kumar to remain in his occupation. He shall behave towards you as a Babu ought to do you shall treat the said Babu in a manner in which you as the Raja think the Babu ought to be treated. I have given Mauzah Gandhwar pergunnah Hati, and Mauzah Bistauli,

Maharaja Rudra Singh

Soon after the accession of Maharaja Rudra Singh to the throne an extensive litigation ensued in the family, which proved a great drain for the Raj exchequer. On the 29th July, 1839 his cousin, Babu Ganesh datta Singh, a grand son of Raja Madhava Singh, filed a case against him for a moity of the Raj. Similarly his own younger brother Kumar Babu Basudeva Singh instituted a suit in the Court of the Session Judge of Patna on the 22nd September, 1840, claiming a larger share in the estate on the ground that the disposition of the family property ought to be regulated by the Hindu law, and not by the family custom. The case went up to the Privy Council. It was finally decided that law of inheritance in this family was to follow the *Kulachar* or family custom, according to which the eldest son succeeded to the throne and the younger sons obtained sufficient landed property for their maintenance. Further in the event of the younger sons dying without a male issue their property was to revert to the Raj.[102]

Pergunnah Alapur, to my first wife. Mauzah Jadalipatti in pergunnah Dharour and Mauzah Mahinathpur in pergunnah Bhour, to my third wife; so the proceeds thereof shall be enjoyed by them. My third wife has no male child, so the produce of the said two Mauzahs will after her (death) revert to the Raj. I have given the proceeds of Mauzah Manoharpur Khajuri and Mauzah Singion and Mauzah Khaus Khatika in pergunnah Gour to the 3 daughters by my first wife, and that of Mauzah Rajanpura and Mauzah Ghoghardiha in pergunnah Gour to the two daughters by my third wife. They during their life time and their putra pautradi shall enjoy the proceeds thereof; and in the event of the said daughters having no putra pautradi you will have full power to resume the said mauzahs. I have made a gift of pergunnah Alapur to Chiranjibi Sri Gopalji by way of Mukhdekhai (a gift presented on the occasion of seeing the face of the baby for the first time after his birth) and in consequence of his minority I have been making settlement and collections in respect thereof, but henceforth you will do the same; and when Gopalji will attain majority, he himself will look after them. The net profit left after payment of govenment revenue of the said pergunnah that has been accumulated during his minority shall be made over by you to the said Gopalji on his attaining majority. My grandfather had granted Jabdi to Raj Kumar Babu Sri Kirat Singh, and Pergunnah Pariharpur Ragho to Maharaj Kumar Baboo Govind Singh, now deceased, and pergunnah Pachohi to Maharaj Kumar Babu Sri Ramapat Singh for their maintenance as Babus. The said Maharaj Kumar Babu Sri Kirat Singh and Maharaj Kumar Babu Sri Gobind Singh, and after his death Babu Sri Ganesh dutt Singh and Maharaj Kumar Babu Ramapat Singh paid the revenue of the said pergunnah to me. You shall now realise the revenue of those pergunnahs from the said Babus, and pay the same along with the revenue of the Raj into the government Treasnry." Dated the 11th Chait Sudi 1246 F. (24th April, 1839).

102. For details please see Moore's Indian Appeals, p. 164.

Maharaja Rudra Singh was a very religious-minded person. It is said that before taking up any fresh work he used to visit the *Harimandir* and consigned all relevant papers etc. before the idol for approval. He started the construction of a temple at Varanasi but due to some obstacles it was left unfinished. His first wife built two temples—one at Kashi Badhiyam (near Sakri station) and the other at Nagarbasi (near Samastipur station). His second wife also built two temples-one at Darbhanga and the other at Behat.

Maharaja Rudra Singh was also known for his charity and promotion of learning. Besides maintaining a number of Sanskrit pandits in his court, he cooperated with the government in spreading education in his estate and outside. Consequent upon Lord Bentinck's famous Resolution of 1835 in favour of English education, when the first Anglo-Vernacular school was proposed to be set up at Muzaffarpur[103] he made liberal subscriptions for the purpose. Out of the total sum of Rs. 12,000 collected on the occassion Maharaja Rudra Singh donated Rs. 5,000, and his younger brother Rs. 2,000. Besides, he also executed a *pottah* of the land on which the school was built. Again when Vernacular school were opened in the several districts of Bihar under Lord Hardinge's scheme of 1844, Maharaja Rudra Singh not only subscribed to the funds for the School at Darbhanga but also made a liberal donation of Rs. 600 for the Vernacular school at Monghyr.[104] He was a member of the Local Committee of Public Instruction. It may be mentioned here that he was the only Indian member in the said Committee, which, in a sense, looked after the educational needs of the district. Commenting upon this noble trait of the Maharaja's character Mr. A. Wyattee, Revenue Surveyor, thus wrote in his Geographical and statistical Report of the district of Tirhut :

"Darbhanga is the residence of the Tirhut Raja, known as Maharaja Roodra Singh.

The Maharaja is famed for his devotions and charity to the Brahmins and alms to the indigent. He is an extensive landed proprietor in the district of Tirhut, Purnea, Bhagalpur and Monghyr and is duly respected by the European Community and by the same for his universal kindness and generosity to every class of people coming within the precincts of his domicile."

Maharaja Rudra Singh had four sons namely, Maheshwar Singh, Guneshwar Singh, Netreshwar Singh and Gopeshwar Singh. He spent

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103. Jha, J. S., op. cit., pp. 288-296.
104. Ibid., p. 325.

lavishly over the marriages of his sons, particularly that of the heir-apparent Maheshwar Singh. A sum of over ten lakh of rupees was spent on the occasion.[105] The Government also bestowed upon the Raj Kumar the *Khilat Fakhera* (Robe of honour) on the occasion, consisting of Sashparch......and three jewels.[106]

Maharaja Rudra Singh died in 1850 at Madheshwar[107] in Darbhanga.

Maharaja Maheshwar Singh

After the death of his father Maharaja Maheshwar Singh ascended on the *Gaddi.* On the 3rd February, 1851 he received a Khelat from the Government, which was sent along with a letter expressive of the abiding loyalty of the family towards the Government.[108] In his time broke out the movement of 1857. Like many other districts of Bihar Tirhut was also stirred with the news of the rising of the Dinapur Regiments. Even earlier the news of the revolt in other parts of the Country had produced a panic throughout the district. For about a month martial law was proclaimed in the district and special responsibilities were fixed upon the local Zamindars for its protection. Maharaja Maheshwar Singh, like many other Zamindars, was watchful of the course of event. To thrust oneself prominently either on the side of Government or of the rebels was a risky affairs. Like all foreign rulers the Government viewed the Indian Zamindars with suspicion. In the case of Maharaja of Darbhanga the Government had some genuine reasons for suspicion. He had above 1000 up-country men in his services and it was feared that if the rebel army ever passed through the neighbourhood of Darbhanga these sepoys were likely to join hand with them. Maharaja Maheshwar Singh's absence from Darbhanga despite the local collector's request for his presence there

105. Bakshi, op. cit., pp. 407-408.

106. Letter from the Governor-General Lord Hardinge to Maharaja Rudra Singh, dated the 19th July, 1847.

107. Jha, P. op. cit., p. 79.

108. The document is quoted in extenso to show the expectations that government entertained on the occasion and how they were belied at the time of the great crisis of 1857.

"Whereas the respectability of the house and the high dignity of the family of the Rajas are well-known, and whereas their loyalty and faithful services: to the Government are proved fact; whereas the predece sor (of the Raja) had always been obedient and loyal to the Government, and had in past times held high rank and eleveted position particularly Maharaja Rudra Singh, the father of this Raja of dignified rank, was a staunch well-wisher of the English Government; whereas all the preceding Rajas of this family had always been well-



Bust of Maharaja Maheshwar Singh

only lent support to the suspicion of the authorities. There prevailed a rumour that one of the Maharaja's Lucknow men had pointed a gun at Mr. Doveton, the Deputy Magistrate at Bahera.[109] About this time the Maharaja was excavating trenches, about 50 feet wide and 16 feet deep, round his houses. This work of the Maharaja was viewed with suspicion, as a preparation for the defence. The authorities, therefore, decided to keep a watch over the movements and activities of the Maharaja. Later on the Maharaja furnished sixteen horse-men for the conveyance of Government dak between Nathpur and Purnea. He also placed two camels at the disposal of the Government. But the 100 sepoys sent by him were not accepted.[110] The Government still doubted his loyalty, and in May, 1858, Mr. Doveton was deputed to make an enquiry into the several allegations against the Maharaja. Mr. Doveton visited Darbhanga, met the Maharaja and made enquiries about the number of Lucknow men in his employment. The explanation given by the Maharaja for digging up the trenches did not convince him. But Doveton was satisfied with the assurance of the Maharaja that he would stop the work if it was deemed objectionable by the Government. He thus reported the result of his enquiry to the Magistrate of Tirhut on the 13th May, 1858 : "From the enquiry made and personal observations I have no reason to believe that the Maharja is doing anything further in the way of preparation." Yet, while forwarding the report to the higher authorities the Magistrate commented that "it is extremely unfortunate that the Maharaja should have

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wisher of the East India Company. Therefore in recognition of loyalty and the high dignity of this Raj, the Deputy Governor of Bengal, does by order of the Viceroy of the Sovereign of England i.e. His Excellency the Governor-General, confer a Khelat of 7 robes, a wreath of pearls consisting of 2 strings and having a diamond in the centre, choga, sapech et with diamonds on the preseent Raja today in Mozaffarpur in the presence of all the officials of the government and public consisting of the gentry and common people of this city. It is desirable that the Maharaja will in his gratefulness for the Khalat, and all those who are present here should desire them to pray for the stablity and permanence of the government of Company."

109. The truth, as reported by the Magistrate of Tirhut on the 115th May, 1858, was that on the 3rd December, 1857, while Mr. Doveton and another European gentleman were going along the road they came upon one of the Lucknow man in the services of the Maharaja with a matchlock and lighted match in his hand. On being questioned the man said he was going to shoot birds and on being told to put out the match, he walked away, saying that he would do so when ordered by his master.

110. Appendix D to the letter from E.A. Samuells, Commissioner of Patna, to A. R. Young, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated the 25th September, 1858.

determined on excavating or on the reopening the trench round his house during the present year, as the fact of his doing so causes some uneasiness."[111] He suggested that the Maharaja should be asked to discontinue the digging and submit a list of his up-country servants with details.

All this, however, did not improve the position of the Maharaja in the eyes of the Government, for like other loyal Zamindars he did not receive any robe of honour or title from the Government after the crisis was over. Although the Maharaja did not commit any open act of hostility against the Government it looks rather strange that the same Maharaja who only two years before had rendered great services to the Government by sending elephants, during the Santhal rising of 1855, should have exhibited a rather indifferent attitude towards a greater crisis for the Government. No less intriguing is the attitude of the Government which had conferred Khelat on the occasion of the marriage of the Maharaja and his accession to the throne and expressed its sincere thanks and satisfaction[112] for the services rendered by him (the Maharaja) during the Santhal risings, should have decided to refuse the services of the sepoys sent by him on the present occasion. So it is not unlikely (and there may be some grains of truth in the general belief) that this event affected the position of the House in the order of precedence in state ceremonial assemblages.

Like his predecessors Maharaja Maheshwar Singh was a patron of learning. He had a number of very learned pandits in his court, some of the more reputed of them were Mm. Kanhai Jha, Babujan Jha, Nandi Jha and Mukteshwar Jha. He also extended his cooperation to the local efforts for the establishment of an Anglo-Vernacular School at Darbhanga in 1855. He not only made liberal subscription to the funds raised for the purpose but also lent a beautiful house for the school free of rent. In 1856-57 he subscribed a huge amount of money to the proposed Industrial Institute at Patna, a scheme which ultimately failed and brought severe criticism and discredit upon its sponsor, Mr. W. Tayler, the Commissioner of Patna. One of the charges against Mr. Tayler was that he had exacted money from the several Zamindars of his division much against their wishes, and the case of Maharaja of Darbhanga was specially cited in that connection.

For various reasons the administration of the estate deteriorated

111. Letter No. 402, from the Magistrate of Tirhut to the Commissioner of Circuit, dated the 15th May, 1858.

112. Raj Darbhanga Record, Goswara, Basta No. 143, Serial Nos. 11293 and 11294.

during the tenure of Maharaja Maheshwar Singh, and it was encumbered with heavy debts. Thus we read in a report of the Secretaty to the Board of Revenue that "for sometime before the death of the late Maharaja (Maheshwar Singh) he was regularly compelled to borrow money on exorbitant terms to meet the instalment of the government revenue as they fell due. As a specimen of the straits to which the proprietor of the princely domain was reduced, it is stated by the present manager, Mr. Anderson, that the Maharaja was positively obliged on one occasion to borrow from him the paltry sum of Rs. 300 being unable to raise amongst the Darbhanga fraternity of parasites, except at penal interest."[113] Of the 44½ lakhs of outstanding arrears in 1866 nearly 33 lakhs dated from the time of Maharaja Maheshwar Singh. As a matter of fact the drain had started in the time of his predecessor, Maharaja Rudra Singh, because of his extravagant expenditure on ceremonial and other occasions. But the unscruplous servants and courtiers were mainly responsible for the misfortune of the family. The mismanagement came to such a state that the rental in the time of Maharaja Maheshwar Singh was "little more than nominal ; it was never realised and was, infact, not susceptible of realization.

The property wos assigned away under fictitious leases, to the numerous hangers on and domestics of the palace, who met all demands for rent, with monstrous counter demands on account of supplies and services, which the Maharajas were too ignorant or too indolent to contest and which were never contested until the court of wards appeared upon the scene".

Maharaja Maheshwar Singh died on the 20th October, 1860 leaving behind two sons and a daughter. As the sons were minors the estate was pladed under the Court of Wards.

Court of Wards (1860-1878)

For the history of the family during the years the estate was under the Court of Wards the following report gives a fairly good account and may be usefully quoted in extenso.

"The Durbhanga estates were taken over by the Court of Wards on the death of the proprietor, Maharaja Maheshwar Singh, on the 20th October, 1860, and were released on the 25th September, 1879 when the present Maharajah, Luchmeshwar Singh, attained his legal majority.

113. Letter No. 19 A, from Secretary to the Board of Revenue to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated the 13th January, 1866.

The estates comprise an area of about 2,410 square mile with a population of 750,000 souls, and are scattered over the districts of Durbhanga, Muzaffarpore, Bhagalpore, Purneah and Monghyr The bulk of the population is rural and agricultural ; the Hindus being to the Mahomedans in the ratio of ten to one; and of the Hindus, one in every ninteen being a high caste Brahmin.

When the Court of Wards took charge in 1860, the condition of the property seemed almost hopelessly bad. The late Maharaja had left a daughter, Rajeshuree Daee, and two minor sons, Luchmeshwar Singh and Rameshwar Singh, aged respectively two years and under one year. The gross annual rental of the estates was nominally Rs. 16,39,357, and the Government revenue only Rs.4,07,484. But the management had for years been left entirely in the hands of underlings. All the villages were leased to farmers, most of them relatives of the Raj servants, who had got their lease on favourable terms. Others were outsiders, men of straw, who had nominally undertaken to pay rents far above the value of the lands, and who made what they could by rack-renting the ryots and levying illegal cesses without attempting to satisfy the Raj demand. Security for payment was never taken from the farmers. Pottahs and Kabooliats were seldom interchanged. The correct rental of the villages was nowhere recorded. Putwaris' paper were seldom forthcoming. The outstanding arrears of rent, at first unknown, proved to amount to Rs. 56,44,972. There were other debts due to the estate, aggregating Rs. 3,37, 775. The debts due by the Maharajah to creditors amounted to a crore of rupees, of which the Court of Wards was compelled to admit Rs. 71, 88,427. The estates were destitute of roads and bridges. The palace was neglected and in ruins; its courtyards quagmires ; its environs a hopeless waste of jungle, pools, and filth. Notoriously all the epidemics of the town took their rise in the Rajbaree. There were no refuges for the sick ; no resting place for travellers not a school in the whole estate. No reproductive works of any kind had any where been attempted.

On the surrender of the estate to the Maharajah last year, all this had been changed. The rent-roll had been re-adjusted and although reductions of rental had bean made amounting to Rs. 5,92,323, the gross rental (including that of a few small properties purchaged) was Rs. 21,61,885. The outstanding arears of rent due to the estate were Rs. 18,51,397 (less than a year's demand), of which Rs. 14,54,664 were good, and in process of realisation. All debts had been paid off long ago. There was a cash balance in hand of Rs. 2,75,733, besides Government securities of the value of Rs. 38,54,500. Over 150 miles of road

had been constructed and bridged (in many places with screw-pile viaducts); upwards of 20,000 trees had been planted along their sides. Feeder and village roads had been made and improved. In Khurrukpore extensive irrigation works, securing that property against famine, had been made and opened. A large bazar had been built at Darbhanga, including a handsome public serai. Of the improvements about the palace itself, the following description is given .—

"The old palace.........(is now) the centre of a pretty garden some 50 acres in extent. It is generally acknowledged that the garden is laid out with much taste; it has good broad metalled roads, a fernery and orchid house, ornamental pieces of water overshadowed by weeping willows, a racquet-court with adjoiniug billiard-room and bath, a deer park, and bathing pavilion for the ladies of the family. Between the palace and the park, in which the Manager's house and office are situated, stands the Maharajah's present residence, a moderately sized but handsome building, furnished with elegance and taste having its own garden, aviary, &c. In convenient proximity are the magnificent range of stables, coach and harness houses and syces' barracks. Not far off is the bandstand, and near to this the school house and a fine hospital, allowed to be one of, if not the best Zillah hospital in India; also a menagerie, dog-kennel, &c.; everywhere, where possible, space, shade, and beauty having been aimed at. Many of the tumble-down and ill-ventilated buildings comprising the palace were pulled down and more suitable ones constructed, including a fine durbar hall 130 feet long, and a handsome suite of apartments for the Dowager Maharanee; but in 1876-77 all, except the last-named, were pulled down, and fresh plans prepared for a new palace. The legal advisers of the Government considered that we ought not to commence the work, as it could not be finished during the Court of Wards' time the plans, therefore, designed and altered at great expense, have been made over to the Maharajah, who has already advertised for a competent engineer and architect to take the work in hand."

In lieu of the ruinous system of farming leases, the whole estate had been brought under direct management. Collections were made without friction or difficulty. The outlying zerat lands had been equitably settled with indigo planters, while those in the victinity of villages had been reserved for the ryots, thus putting an end to the constant disputes between the factories and the cultivators. Hundreds of small embankments water channels, tanks and wells had been constructed from advances made without interest to the tenants. Complete survey

had been made of the greater part of the property, and a considerable area had been resettled, to the advantage both of the estate and of the cultivators. Twenty vernacular schools had been established by the Raj educating 1,000 children, aid being, at the same time, given to other educational institutions not belonging to the estate. Three admirable hospitals were kept up for the use of the tenantry, while assistance was also afforded to six charitable dispensaries in various places near. Above all, both the Maharajah and his brother had received a thorough English Education, were proficient in manly exercises, and free from the vices which are too often the ruin of native magnates. The Maharajah had been trained to manage his own affairs and to take a lively interest in the welfare of his people, while his brother had been deemed fit for appointment to the Civil Service of the province, in which he is now an Assistant Magistrate. They had both travelled over the greater part of Upper India, and made the personal acquaintance of the Viceroy, Lieutenant-Governor, and other high officers of the State, as well as of many native potentates, to all of whom they commended themselves by their unassuming intelligence and gentleman like demeanour.

During the incumbency of the Court of Wards, the aggregate demand of rent due to the estate amounted to Rs. 4,26,79,578. Of this Rs. 3,54,66,458, or 83 per cent; was collected, and Rs, 55,39,610 remitted. The total rcceipts from all sources during the management were Rs. 4,84,50,660, and the total disburesments Rs. 4,80,86,228, of which Rs. 32,90,934 or only 67 per cent of the receipts, represents the cost of management. Rs. 80,41,113 were expended in payment of Government revenue, and Rs. 31,98,000 or 65 per cent, of the receipts, in the allowances of the family including social and religious ceremonies.

The collection of rent was on several occasions during the management seriously affected by drought and scarcity. The following occount of these calamities (which serve to explain the heavy remissions of rent shown in the accounts) is extracted from the Manager's report :—

"In 1864 the rice crop, which is the chief produce of the district, and on the sufficiency of which the prosperous condition of the people of the northern pergunnah entirely depends, had failed to the extent of nearly one-half, and the price of rice had risen to twelve seers per rupee. There was extreme distress among the poorest classes, and deaths occurred from starvation in the north and east divisions of the district.

In 1865 with the prospect of a still more complete failure of the rice crop in the line of country bordering on the Nepal territory, and a

certain deficiency of that crop in a greater of less degree throughout the sub-division of Mudhubunee and the northern portions of the sub-divisions af Durbhanga and Muzafferpore the prices of rice and Indian-corn, the staple articles of food, rose to three times their ordinary rate, cases of of suicide for want of food and deaths from absolute starvation occurred.

The portion of the Raj estates most affected was the Panchmahalla, comprising pergunnahs Ludwari, Delawurpore, Bahadurpore, Purihar, Muhoowas and Nurrungah. It appears adequate measures for relief were not organized, only a small sum being spent in charitable relief and the consequence was considerable mortality aud extensive desertion among the poorer classes of ryots.

Mr. Cockerell, the Famine Commissioner, on his visit to Purihar, wrote as under :—

On my visit to Purihar, I went into several of these villages, and found them depopulated to the extent of two thirds, only about 30 out of 80 or 100 houses in each being found inhabited, the standing crop on the lands that had been cultivated was very poor; much of it seemed to be hardly worth the cost of harvesting, and would probably be left as food for the cattle. The condition of the people in this part of the district will need the attention of the district officer, should the prices of food again become high, for, there being no stores to depend upon, the distress will of course be great."

The second famine is too well known to necessitate any lengthy report, but it is satisfactory to record that the steps taken to avert actual famine were successful and approved of by Government, and that there was actually less mortality among the Raj tenantry in the trying year of 1874, than in ordinary years. The expenditure, of course, was great, but not incommensurate with the great saving of life, as also with the success attained in keeping the tenantry on the property and enabling them at once to resume their ordinary agricultural pursuits. Mr. Elliot's able report on the Mysore famine is so forcibly illustrative on this point that further comment would be superfluous; but it is right to record that the relatives of the Maharaja, in an address to Lord Northbrook in 1874, gratefully acknowledged the wisdom of the steps taken to avert the disaster to the estate; and in the address presented to Sir Stewart Bayley, on the recent visit to Darbhanga on the 29th September, the Maharaja and the members of his family bore grateful testimony to the benefit of all his proceedings during the eventful period of 1874, while Commissioner of the Patna Division.

The amount actually spent was as follows :—

	Rs.	An.	P.
On works of utility	8,37,948	15	10
On purchase and transit of grain	20,12,794	11	3½
On loans to ryots	77,646	3	6
Charitable relief in cash	30,017	6	0
Total	29,58,407	4	7½
Subsequently on remission of rent in consequence of famine to Ryots	3,95,442	0	0
Subsequently on remission of rent in consequence of famine to ticcadars for the benefit of their ryots	2,04,647	0	0
Total—	6,00,089	0	0
Grand Total	35,58,496	4	7½

Serious anxiety was again felt in 1876. The short rainfall of 1875, and the early cessation of rain in September, 1876, caused another partial failure of the *aghani* crop in pergunnahs Allapore and Nareedigur, and there was consequently great distress amongst the poorer classes. Adequate measures were at once adopted to alleviate distress and suffering.

The sum spent was as follows :—

	Allapore	Nareedigur
On charitable relief...	16,590	23,717
On works of utility....	11,650	25,440
Advance for purchase of paddy seed.	8,103	13,752
Remissions of rent to ryots....	81,000	44,440
Total—	1,17,343	1,07,349

The total expenditure on public works, from first to last, has been Rs. 54,92,245 accounted for as follows :—

1.	Reproductive works (chiefly the Khurukpore Irrigation scheme and Maharajgunj Bazzar)	8,73,917
2.	Works of public utility (including famine works)	25,07,558
3.	Works of domestic improvement (alterations to palce and the like)	9,38,215
4.	Minor works	6,20,534
5.	Tools, plant, establishment & c.	5,16,921
6.	Suspense balance, value of stock.	35,100
	Total—	54,92,245

Sir Ashley Eden is not satisfied that the expenditure upon public works within the Raj was at all times judicious or economical. He considers that the establishments kept up were often needlessly extravagant, and the rates paid needlessly high. But on the whole there can be no doubt that great improvements have been effected, and that the Maharajah has received good value for most of the outlay.

The Lieutenant-Governor observes, however, with regret that while the Court of Wards has done so much for the proprietor of the estate, it is frankly admitted by the Manager that the condition of the Raj tenants is not generally prosperous. Many of them are said to be living merely from hand to mouth, having suffered much from successive bad seasons. It is urged that they would have been much worse off had it not been for the good roads made, enabling them to take advantage of the high prices of produce; the liberal remissions of rent in famine years; and free advances of money given without interest. They have also, it is stated, been relieved from multifarious illegal cesses, and from the unjust exactions of ticcadars or petty lease-holders, are more alive to their legal rights, and less in debt than they were in former years. Granting all this, there can, Sir Ashley Eden fears, be little doubt that the cultivators on the Darbhanga estates are suffering from the same causes which in long course of years have reduced the peasantry of Behar generally to a lower level than that of the ryots in Central and Eastern Bengal. There has been in years gone by, under the Court of Wards, the same kind of rack-renting, the same ignoring of ryot-right, the same unwillingness to recognise occupancy tenures, the same resort to illegal distraint, that have been found and condemned in every district of Bihar. The traditions of the Court of Wards have from the time of its institution been essentially proprietary. The chief aim of its managements in every estate has been to make the most of the property for the benefit of the owner; and although it has, in its relatian to the tenantry, been incontestably a better and a wiser landlord than the ordinary run of native Zemindars, it is only within the last few years that anything has been done by it to improve directly the position of the cultivators. The most important measure of this kind in the Darbhanga estate, which has been actually carried through to completion, has been the survey and settlement of Alapore. This was, it may be said, forced upon the Court by the report of the Special Commission which enquired into the condition of the pergunnahs of Allapore and Nareedigur after the drought of 1875. It then appeared that " a large number of the tenantry had fled from their houses to avoid the burden of debt due to enhanced rent which lay upon them too heavily." The re-settlement of the

pergunnah under the supervision of Mr. Finucane, C. S., led to a readjustment of rents which, while affording considerable relief to over assessed ryots, actually led, by the discovery of lands concealed by the putwaris and head ryots, to an increase of the Raj receipts. Mr. Finucane has now nearly completed a cadastral survey of the whole of the Tirhut and Bhagalpur estates, and the Maharajah has been allowed to retain his services to bring the work finally to a close. But in these preceedings no attempt is being made to revise the rates of rent. The Maharajah is left to make his own arrangements for this at his own time. The Lieutenant Governor trusts that, in any action which the Maharajah may take in this direction, he will remember that it will be his wisest policy to endeavour to secure upon his estates a substantail well-to-do tenantry, able to meet the ordinary vicissitudes of season, self respecting and jealous of their own rights, while recognising and satisfying the just and moderate demands of their landlord. In the long run it is far more profitable to the landlord to leave in the hands of the cultivators such a share in the profits of the soil as will enable them to face even the worst seasons without actual suffering, than to take from them all that they have, with the certainty that enormous sums will have to be expended by him in years of famine in maintaining the ryots on his estate. It may be taken as certain that the legislature must ere long interfere for the protection of the Bihar peasant against arbitrary ejectment and undue exaction of rent; and those landlords will suffer least from the intervention of the State who have themselves entered into equitable arrangements with their tenants, and admitted of their own free will those substantial rights which under the old law and customs of India, every resident cultivator undoubtedly had, and which the frequent recurrence of famine among the poverty stricken population of Bihar seems to make it a mater of imperial necessity once more to revive. The Lieutenant-Governor, from what he knows of the Maharajah, believes that he will prove himself an active landlord. But he also believes him to be an upright and benevolent landlord, strongly impressed with a desire to improve the condition of the poorer classes residing on his estate. It is hardly necessary to impress upon him that the best practical way in which he can do justice to his education and responsibilities, and show his appreciation of the care which has been bestowed by Government on him and on his estate, will be by showing himself the friend and protector of his ryots, and by setting an example to the neighbouring landholders, and using his influence with them to bring about a reform of the undoubted evils of the land system of Bihar.

The least satisfactory section of the report is that which gives an

account of the estate litigation. Probably much of this was unavoidable and, on the whole, the results were not unfavourable to the Raj. But one or two heavy cases are still pending, which the Lieutenant-Governor would have been glad to have seen settled before the surrender of the estate. The recoveries under civil court decrees in favour of the Raj were very good, but the results in rent-suits do not appear to the Lieutenant Governor to have been at all satisfactory. Thus, decrees for Rs. 44,61,859 were obtained, but only Rs. 18,74,512 could be realised; Rs. 18,53,019 had to be definitely remitted, and Rs. 7,34,328 are outstanding. These figures seem to indicate either remissness on the part of the management, which there is no reason to suspect, or positive inability to pay on the part of most of the debtors, which is dresumably the true explanation. The Lieutenant-Governor trusts that in his management the Maharajah, will be able to keep clear of the civil courts, and will lay to heart the principle that when rent is known to be irrecoverable owing to calamities of season, it is often wisest to remit it absolutely and at once. A ryot who owes large arrears is generally very unwilling to pay current rent. He prefers to hold back and take his chance of getting off more in the end.

The general managers and assistant managers under the Court of Wards have been :—

1. Mr. J. Forlong, Manager, from February, 1861 to July 1868, with intervals of leave, during one of which Mr. G. Anderson of Kumtoul, acted in his place.

2. Colonel J. Burn, Manager, from December, 1868 to March, 1876, and again from November, 1877 to the surrender of the estates.

3. Major R. C. Money, Officiating Manager, from March, 1876 to November, 1877.

4. Mr. G. Lhewhellin, Assistant General Manager, from 1867 to the surrender of the estates.

5. Mr. J. M. McQueen, Assistant Manager, in Purneah, from 1871 to the surrender of the estates.

6. Mr. H. O. King, Assistant Manager in Khurruckpore, from 1874 to the surrender of the estates.

Mr. Forlong found everything in confusion on taking charge, and had a very difficult task to face in clearing up accounts, paying off debts, and providing for the mofussil management. He made no change, however, in the farming system under which the estate was then managed, and which, in fact, lasted until Sir George Campbell abolished it in 872. Colonel Burn's services have always been highly spoken of by the Com-

missioners of Patna, by the Court of Wards, and by the local Government. He did much for the training of the minors and the improvement of their property, and in the famine of 1874-75 his exertions were great and unremitting. The new system of direct management was begun in his time under the orders of Government; but it was during Major Money's temporary incumbency that it was first put upon a satisfactory footing. Major Money's services have lately been made available to the Maharajah, at the special request of the latter, to assist him in the administration of his great property."[114]

Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh

Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh was only two years old when his father died. Be it said to the credit of the Court of Wards that arrangements were made for giving the two brothers the best of education that was possible at the time. The anxiety of the authorities in this regard is clearly exhibited from the following extract of a letter from the Secretary of the Board of Revenue. He thus communicated the sentiments of the Board to the Government, "no expense should be spared in giving the young Maharaja and his brother the best education possible and the Board propose at once to take steps for the engagement of a thoroughly competent tutor on a liberal salary. They are happy to learn from private sources, as well as from the official reports that the young Maharaja (now eight years old) and his brother are possessed of unusual intelligence and are children of remarkable promise."[115] Accordingly the two brothers were sent to the Ward's Institute at Varanashi and placed under the care and guidence of Mr. Chester McNaghten, a well-known educationist and scholar. Good care was taken by the tutor to build up the character of the young Rajkumars. Attention was also paid to their physical training—such as riding, shooting, swimming etc. But consequent upon the appointment of M.McNaghten as Principal of the Raj Kumar College at Rajkot, the two brothers returned to Darbhanga and their education was entrusted to an equally able teacher, Mr. Alexander.

Even before he formally assumed the charge of his Raj Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh took a good deal of interest in the management of his estate. Once when one Assistant Manager of the Raj went on leave he evinced a desire to do the work of that office himself, approval for

114. Revenue Department, Land Revenue, Resolution, dated Darjeeling, the 24th June, 1880.

115. Letter No. 19 A, from the Secretary to the Board of Revanue, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated the 13th January, 1866.



Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh

which was immediately accorded. And the young Maharaja acquitted himself creditably. Lord Ulick Brown encouraged him to speak freely on any subject connected with the estate. On attaining his majority, the Maharaja though retained the services of the Europeans, he largely directed the management of his property.[116] So it was not the language of mere convention when on the occasion of the installation Darbar at Bankipore in 1880, the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Stuart Bayley, said that "I have had the pleasure of the acquaintance of the young Maharaja Bahadur of Darbhanga since long. There was a time when hardly a day passed that I had not the occasion of applying my time and energy to the supervision of the estate. I have been watching his education and growth from his very boyhood and when I find him in the fullness of time developed into a grown-up youth, who by reason of his ability, character, culture and high qualities is eminently well fitted for the great position he is going to occupy. I hope that the bright future that awaits the Maharaja Bahadur, a due share of the credit will be given to the administration of the Wards and the persons to whom his education was entrusted."

The high hopes entertained by the Lieutenant-Governor Bayley regarding the virtues of the young Maharaja were amply and splendidly fulfilled in the years that followed his assumption of the *Gaddi.* He turned out to be a great administrator. As a Zamindar also he was eminently successful and set a brilliant example for his fellow Zamindars by his numerous activities and social services. He had his own ideals of the duties of a landlord towards his tenantry. In one of his public speeches he is reported to have expressed his conviction that "so long as the mutual conflict between the Zamindars and the tenants will not end, there will be no peace and prosperity in the Country." On another occasion he observed that the duty of the landlord was not confined to the realising of rents from the tenants and overflowing of his own coffers; it was also an important part of his duty to spend a fair portion of his receipts on the welfare of the tenantry. During the early years of the administration of the Court of Wards much oppression had been committed on the ryots so much so that a large number of them had fled to the Nepal territory. In later years efforts were made on Governmental level for the return of these people but the painful memory of the oppression acted as a great deterrent for them. So it must have consoled the ryots when they found their Maharaja remitting their rents wholly or partially in times of famine. It was this human feeling for the tenantry that led the Maharaja to estab-

116. Buckland, C. E., Benal under the Lieutenant-Governor, part II, p. 1069,

lish the well-equipped Lady Dufferin Hospital at Darbhanga. The Maharaja established another hospital at Kharagpur (Monghyr) for the tenantry of that region. In the eighties of the 19th Century when the relation between the landlords and tenants became very much strained one of the causes mentioned in the official report was the improved condition of the tenants of the Darbhanga Raj. Buckland writes that "the tenants of the small proprietors saw that in the great Darbhanga estate the position of the cultivators was being improved, defined and settled and this encouraged them to demand more equal treatment for themselves."[117]

Equally great was the love of Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh for education. The scheme of Vernacular education inaugurated in the estate under the administration of the Court of Wards received a great impetus under him. The higher education also received encouragement from his generosity. In the Darbhanga Raj High English School education was imparted free.[118] The Calcutta University was a great beneficiary in this respect. Sanskrit education also enjoyed its due share of the Maharaja's bounty. On every Monday the Maharaja used to hold the meeting of Pandits and awarded prizes to the successful pandits in the scholastic disputations according to their merit. This practice was continued even after his death by his second Rani for a long time.[119] The Calcutta Madrassa received a donation of Rs. 12,000 from the Maharaja, which was utilised in creating two senior scholarships of Rs. 10 each per menson called "the Darbhanga Madriss Scholarships."[120] Numerous other private educational institutions, of various Denominations, like the Doveton College, Calcutta; the Calcutta Library Society; Bengali Middle Class School, Darbhanga; the Girls School, Muzaffarpur; Jhaooganj School, Patna; M. E. School, Lohardagga; Sanskrit College, Varanasi; etc., also received monetary help from time to time. It is interesting to note that the Maharaja visualised the great prospect of Hindi, as a language, in this country and in 1898 he offered to bear the entire expenditure for the creation of a Chair for Hindi if the Calcutta University agreed to introduce the teaching of that subject. There had been objections to the introduction of the subject on the ground of finances.

117. Ibid, p. 702.

118. For details please see my two articles on "Education in the Darbhanga Raj" published in the proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission, Vol. Nos. XXXIV & XXXV.

119. "Mithilank" of the Mithila Mihir, p. 42.

120. D. R. R., General Department, Memo No. 93, dated the 8th February 1884, from the Inspector of Schools to the Manager of Raj Darbhanga.

His generosity was, however, not limited to such laudable objects in his own country. He made a gift of Rs. 50,000 to the Imperial Institute in England.

Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh was no less interested in the political advancement of his country. These were the days when racial and imperialistic considerations guided the various measures of the government. As an enlightened Zamindar he helped the growth of the nationalist forces which had appeared ont he political horizon of the country. Among the early supporters of the Indian National Congress the name of the Maharaja stands out pre-eminently. From the papers discovered by me some years back in the Darbhanga Raj Archives it is clear that he contributnd Rs. 10,000 annually to the Congress.[121] The fact of his having purchased the Lowther Castle in 1888 to enable the Congress to hold its session at Allahabad is well-known. He helped in the publication of "India", the Congress organ, and it was owing largely to his financial assistance that it became a weekly paper in 1898. He also contributed Rs. 5,000 towards the cost of Surendra Nath Banerjea's deputation to England in 1890.[122] His love for the Indian National Congress is exhibited from the fact that even at the time of his death he did not forget to instruct his successor, Maharaja Rameshwar Singh, to continue his help to this organisation. It was this sincered interest of the Maharaja in the political advancement of his countrymen that encouraged Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, to address him the following letter from Natal (Africa) in July, 1897.

"I beg to draw your attention to a copy sent to you of the Indian Petition to Mr. Chamberlane (?) regarding the anti-Indian Bills of the last session of the Natal Parliament. The Bills have received the Governor's consent and are Acts in operation. The Crown has the power to disallow any Acts of the colonial Legislatures within two years after their passage and it is ont he strength of this proviso that the petitioners pray for Mr. Chamberlane's intervention.

The Bills in my humble opinion have only to be read in order to be.........Comment thereon seems superfluous unless there is a powerful public opinion against the disabilities which are being heaped upon the Indians in Natal. Our days are numbered. Natal beats both the.........in its studied persecution of the Indians and it is Natal that can least do

121. These papers are published in the Report of the Regional Records Survey Committee, Bihar (1960-51), pp. 22-34.

122. Singh, H. L., Problems and Prospects of British Rule in India (1885-1898), p, 243.

without Indians. She *must have* them under indenture. She *won't have* them.........me. It will not improve the Indian, unless we stop this existing (?) arrangement and stop indentured coolies...........and request you to redouble your exertions over.........."

And quick was the encouraging response of the Maharaja as it is clear from the following office note of his, dated the 12th August, 1897.

"Thank Mr. Gandhi for all his......papers. Say that I feel deeply obliged to him for his letters[123] and the papers he has been sending to me from time to time.

(2) Ask him to let me know what steps he wishes to take for the redress of the grievances of the Indians in Natal and assure him that it always be a most pleasiug duty to me to coopenate with him in his laudable endeavours to the best of my ability".

Even before the establishment of the Indian National Congress the Maharaja interested himself with the activities of the several political organisations in this country. In 1883 the Indian Association started a movement for raising a National Fund "with a view to secure the political advancement of the country by means of constitutional agitation in India and England, and by other legitimate means......"[124] A Committee consisting of Dr. K. M. Banerjea (as President), Mohesh Chunder Chowdhry, Narendra Nath Sen, Anand Mohan Bose, and Surendra Nath Banerjea (Secretary) was appointed for the purpose. Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh was approached for his cooperation in the movement. The Maharaja's response appears to have been encouraging, for we read in a letter of K. M. Banerjea, that "it is to us a matter of no small satisfaction to find so distinguished a nobleman as the Maharaja of Darbhanga taking an interest in the important movement that has been inaugurated and we fervently hope that he will encourage it with his enlightened munificence"[125] Again on the 14th November, 1883, while enclosing a printed copy of the Appeal,[126] Surendra Nath Banerjea wrote to his friend Babu

123. Only one letter of Mahatma Gandhi has been discovered so far in the Darbhanga Raj Archives.

124. Resolution adopted in a public meeting held on Tuesday evening, the 17th July, 1883, at Babu Anath Nath Deb's Bazar, Beadon Street, Calcutta, to consider the means of raising a National Fund.

125. Letter No. 603, from K. M. Banerjea, to the Private Secretary to the Maharaja of Darbhanga, dated the 28th July, 1883.

126. The Appeal mentions the following objects of the Constitutional agitation, viz. "the wider employment of our countrymen in all departments of the State, whether covenanted or un-covenanted in accordance with oft-repeated pleadges ; the

Chandra Sekhar Bose, an Assistant Manager of the Maharaja, that "if the Maharaja does not wish his name to appear, His Highness has only to intimate his wish to that effect, and it will be carried out." He hoped that the Maharaja as "one of the most enlightened Zamindars in the province," would "not hesitate to lend a helping hand in aid of a movement which is fraught with good to the country."

He was likewise approached for accepting the Vice-Presidentship of the Imperial Indian Association, when it came into existence in 1897. The Association had been started with the purpose of "promoting the just claims of the princes, Nawabs, ahd other territorial chiefs" in the interests of India and the empire. The deposition of Maharaja of Jhallawar in 1896 and the reduction of the Rajah of Bansi without a state trial were perhaps the immediate causes of this movement. The organisers of the Association hoped that by starting such a movement not only their rights and privileges in regerd to the Paramount power would be better defined and recognised but they would also be safeguarded against the arbitrary and unconstitutional action of the government.[127]

Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh was nominated to the Legislative Council of the Governor-General in 1883 and he took his seat for the first time on the 12th march, 1883. He took a prominent part in the lengthened discussion on tbe Bengal Tenancy Bill. His stand in the discussion of the famous Ilbert Bill, enabling the trial of Europeans and Eurasians by Jury before a District Magistrate endeared him to all advanced political thinkers of India. On the 25th January, 1884, he moved an amendment to the effect that "this right should be extended to Indian British subjects as well in all Sessions cases."

In August, 1893, the non-official members of the Bengal Council exhibited their confidence in the Maharaja by electing him unanimously to the newly reformed Supreme Council. As a member of this council the Maharaja made vigorous protest, on the 10th March, 1884, against the Tariff Duty Bill, which sought to impose import duty on iron, coal and other commodities necessary for the manufacture of cloth in this country. The Bill at the same time envisaged the exemption of imported

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perfecting of the system of Local Self-Government; the gradual introduction of representative institutions in the government of this country; the maintenance of a permanent delegate in England; the better and more truthful representation of our views before the British Public through the agency of the Press and Public meetings, etc."

127. From the Members of the working Committee of the Imperial Indian Association, London, to Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh, dated the 30th April, 1897.

cotton goods from payment of any duties. The motive behind such a protective duty, as the Maharaja frankly pointed out, was to protect "the mills of England against our own mills." In 1898 the Maharaja likewise opposed the amendment of the Indian Penal Code, regarding sedition. The government bill sought to throw the onus of proving innocence on the prosecuted. The Maharaja was of the view that such a procedure was against all rules. His amendment was, however, turned down by the official Members. We also get a glimpse of the Maharaja's views regarding the holding of the simultaneous civil service examination both in England and India. It is in the form of a letter, but the document is so much damaged and mutilated that neither the name of the addressee nor date can be ascertained from it. The following extracts which form a portion of the letter, however, make the spirit of the Writer abundantly clear.

"I have received your telegram asking for my views about the simultaneous civil service examinations being held both in India and England. From......I understand (that) there cannot be......different opinion,......candidate.........fit to work in the......service unless he...... India and visits foreign country. A thorough knowledge of the country, he has to work in, is far more necessary than a knowledge of foreign countries.

From an orthodox stand point of view, we must insist on the omission of these clauses from the (bill)......(If the)......examinations are (held) both in india and England and the successful candidates get appointments in the Civil Service without being compelled to go to England, then, I think, there is a grand opening for both orthodoz Hindus and Mahomedans.

I am in favour of the Resolution on principle but against the details.

Some people think that this is not the time to raise objections, and that we ought to try and introduce the......end of the wedge. But... (my)...own impression is that it will be extremely difficult to get any modifications after the Bill is once passed. I am quite prepared to see a bill passed in which inducements are held out to those passed candidates who would like to go to a foreign country.

Besides looking at my objections to the clauses from a strictly orthodox Hindu point of view I base them on the most liberal principle that it is unfair to compel the Indian candidates for the Indian Civil Service to suffer all the inconvenience and expenditure of lengthened

residence in a foreign land, whereas the English candidates for the same service are under no such compulsion. On the other hand in my humble opinion, a residence in India is far more necessary before taking up a civil service appointment.

............it we should try and strengthen Mr. Paul's hands as much as posible. At the same time it appears to me that the bill introduced by Mr. Dadabhai Nowroji is to a certain extent against the spirit of the parliamentary Resolution. I object to the clauses in Mr. Nowroji's bill that make residence in England compulsory. Residence in England might have its advantages......(but I) cannot understand........."

Maharaja Lakshmiskwar Singh was associated with various other organisations. He was the founder President of the Bihar Landholders' Association. At the time of the Cadastral Survey of Bihar he was engaged in organising a central Landholders' party to present an united opposition against certain measures of the Government which the Zamindars considered to be prejudicial to their interest. He was also the President of the British Indian Association for several terms.

Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh's private life was also exemplary. Amiability of disposition and charming manner, an admirable sense of propriety and sincere love for mankind in general were his main characteristics. He was a wide reader and could afford to indulge his taste for books. He entrusted the work of building up of a first rate library on Mm. Dr. Ganganath Jha, who started the work with celerity. Parcels of books costing lakhs of rupees began to arrive from England and other places.[128] Efforts were made to collect all Sanskrit works, either published or in manuscript form. A scheme for the publication of rare manuscripts was also taken up.

Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh founded Botanical and Geological gardens at Darbhanga, which were very rich in their collections. He was equally interested in horses, and his stables contained numerous horses of very fine breads. He was himself a great sportsman and was very fond of organising shooting expedition. He had a number of renowned wrestlers on his establishment. He was also a lover of music and had

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128. The 'Mithilanka' of Mithila Mihir contains, at page 162, an interesting story in this connection. Mr. Bell, a civilian, who was then the General Manager of the Raj, was not very happy with this indulgence of Maharaja. Once, when almirah were requisitioned for keeping the books, he was bit annoyed and said that he was unable to cope with the onrush of books. When it was reported to the Maharaja he is said to have thus retorted "Tell Mr. Bell that Maharaja does not amount of money spent upon books and hospitals."

employed the best musicians in the country.

Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh died on the 17th December, 1898.

Maharaja Rameshwar Singh

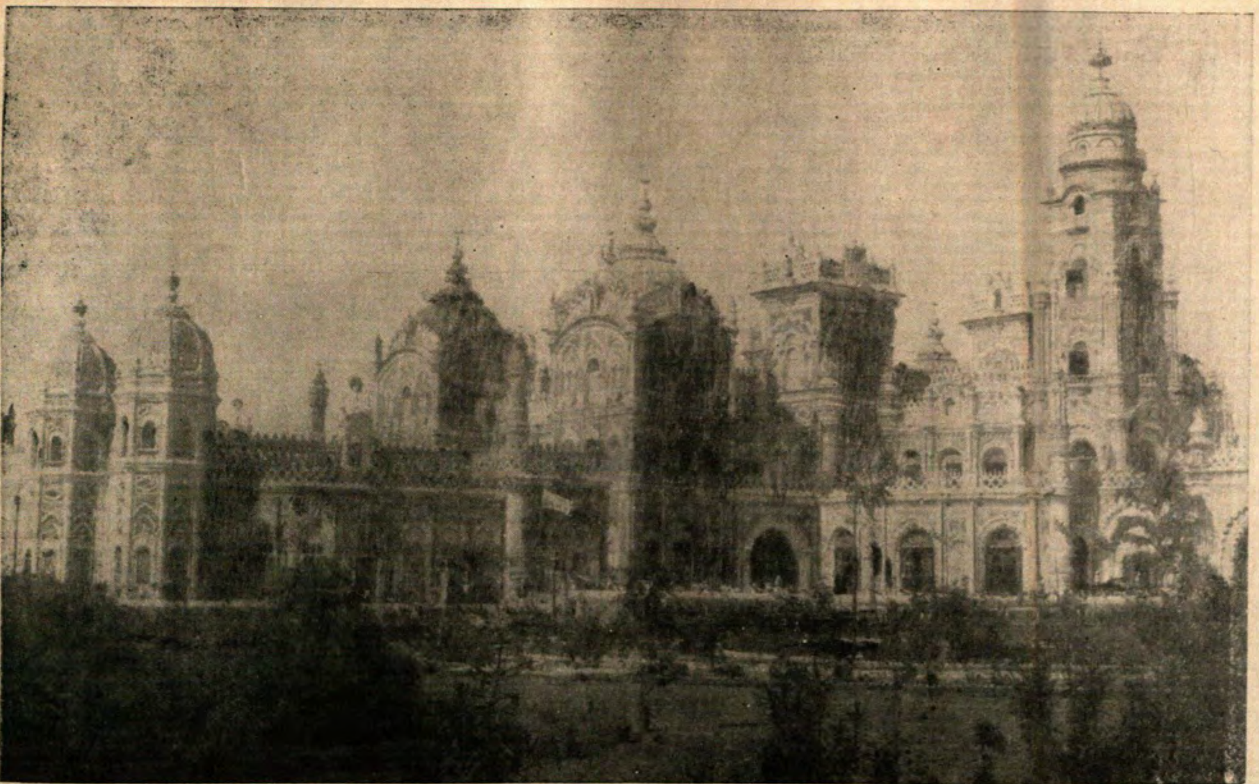
On the death of his elder brother Rameshwar Singh ascended the *Gaddi* of Darbhanga Raj. He was only nine months old when his father died. Along with his elder brother he also receivad the best education that was possible during those days. He was a brilliant student and appeared at the Entrance examination at so young an age that special permisson had to be obtained for the purpose from the University. He did not go in for University education but continued his private studies and came to be regarded as an authority on many subjects. He was well versed in Sanskrit and English and knew Hindi, Persian, Arabic, Urdu and Bengali. On the creation of the newly statutory civil service he was the first Indian to be appointed an Assistant Magistrate. In that capacity he worked at Darbhanga and Chapra. Later on he became joint Magistrate at Bhagalpur, but on the advice of his brother he resigned from the service and joined as a member to the Legislative Council of Bengal. Because of his meritorious services in various capacities the title of Raja Bahadur was conferred upon him. It may be mentioned here that on his accession to the throne Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh had set apart the paragana of Bachhaur for his maintenance and later on Maharaja Rameshwar Singh made Rajnagar the headquarters of the Darbhanga Raj. There he built his palace, Secretriat and temples at an enormous cost.

Maharaja Rameshwar Singh was on the most happy terms with the government, and exhibited his loyalty to the Crown by rendering conspicuous services to the government in critical as well as normal times. He not only subscribed liberally to the war funds but also organised and addressed meetings for raising loans for the government. Even from the platform of religion he exhorted the people to show their unqualified loyalty to the Crown, and spoke of the king of England as the representative of God for Indians. It was at his initiative that the All-India Hindu Religious Sammelan, held on the 10th April, 1915, at Hardwar the following Resolution was passed.

"This All-India grand Conference of Hindus of all sects and creeds assembled at Hardwar on the occasion of the great and sacred Kumbha Parva does hereby resolve that in order to give practical expression to *Raj-Bhakti* (devotion to the king), as laid down in Hindu Shastras, all Hindus are enjoined to offer prayer for the longevity and prosp-



Maharajadhiraja Rameshwar Singh, G.C.I.E., K.B.E.



Naulakha Palace at Rajnagar

erity of king Emperor in all gatherings for the religious performances, lectures, recitations, etc., etc., and all religious concourses held in temples and sacred places, after salutation to our Gods, and it is further resolved that leaders of Sanatan Dharma (orthodox Hinduism) should see that the above resolution is carried into effect."

Resolutions to the same effects were passed in the meetings held under his presidentship in 1916, at Madras and Mathura. The Government on its part also showed its appreciation of his services by conferring upon him various titles and making the title of Maharajadhiraj hereditary. He was appointed a member on various Government Committees and Commissions. But this did not prevent him from expressing his independent opinion if an occasion demanded it. As a non-official member on the Police Commission (1905) he wrote his famous note of dissent, advocating strongly the separation of Judicial and Executive functions. On the inauguration of the new Province of Bihar and Orissa in 1912 the Maharaja was appointed a member of the Executive Council of the Lt. Governor. The most notable event during his tenure of office (1912-17) was the Settlement of Champaran Agrarian question. It is said that he had a considerable hand in the appointment of the Champaran Agrarian Committee.

But far more important were the non-official activities of the Maharaja. Like his brother he was associated with many public organisations. He was President of the British Indian Association for many terms. He remained the President of the Bihar Landholders Association throughout his life and in that capacity he actually shaped the policy of Zamindars towards the Government and the tenants. He awakened his fellow-Zamindars to take note of the rapidly changing times and the role that they were likely to be called upon to play. From the platforms of these associations he strongly pleaded for the amalgamation of the several associations of the Zamindars in various parts of the country, to make a concerted effort for the safeguard of their interest. The Morley-Minto reforms were shortly to be introduced and the Maharaja wished that the Zamindars should have an effective representation in the administration of public affairs. The first World War necessitated a greater cooperation on the part of Zamindars with Government war-efforts and the Maharaja called upon his fellow-Zamindars to extend their help by contributing liberally to the War loans and inducing their respective ryots for recruitment. Meanwhile he also succeeded in organising an All-India Landholders Association with its headquarters at Delhi. He early realised the necessity of having a proper organ of their own which would make a

thorough study of the various problems affecting the interests of the land-holders, and authoritatively express their view-points on important questions of public interest. He, therefore, helped the establishment of a Weekly—the *Indraprastha* of Delhi. Later on he made extensive tours in the country to organise public opinion in favour of his demand for a special electorate or a second chamber composed of elected or nominated members of the territorial aristocracy. He was not happy with the scant notice that had been taken of the fact in the proposed Montford Reforms. Since their interest was vitally involved in the land he felt that any enactments of legislation affecting existing arrangements of land should require further protection. No such measure should be passed in any Legislative Assembly to which three-fourths of the representatives of the land-holders took objection. By a Resolution passed in the meeting held at Patna, on the 20th July, 1918, the Maharaja as President of the All-India Landholders' Association, was requested to arrange a deputation of the land-holders of all parts of India to wait upon the Viceroy in that connection.

But Maharaja was equally emphatic about the interest of the tenantry. As a matter of fact he believed that the interests of the Zamindars and the tenants were identical, and it was imperative upon the Zamindars, taking note of the spirit of the time, that they fully took their tenantry into their confidence and made them felt the identity of their interest with their own.[129] He advised them that they should lose no time in giving a substantial voice to the tenants in the management of their village affairs. To achieve this object it was necessary to form village conciliatory Boards, consisting of representatives of both the landholders and the tenants. To this body might be entrusted, along with other work, the task of promoting the cause of education and spreading ideas of hygiene and sanitation in the rural areas.[130] From the Presidential chair of a meeting of the landholders of Bihar and Orissa, held at Patna on the 6th April, 1926, the Maharaja observed the following :—

"The destinies of the landholders and tenants are jointly but inseperably welded with the development or deterioration of agriculture and unless and until we fully understand one another's interdependent interest, any accountable distrust existing between the two shall never be eradicated. Neither the landlord nor the tenant is merely a legal

129. Speeches of the Hon'ble Sir Rameshwar Singh, Maharajadhiraj of Darbhanga, p. 126.

130. Ibid, p. 217.



Maharajadhiraja Rameshwar Singh with his sons in ascetic costumes.

fiction of yesterday or today foisted on Society for any particular exigency."[131]

Maharajadhiraj Rameshwar Singh was a deeply religiousminded person. He conducted his private life according to Shastric injunctions and worked heart and soul for the revival of the Sanatanadharma. But he bore no hatred for other religions, for he believed that all religions of the World represent, each in its own way, the striving of all human hearts to obtain a more and more intimate knowledge. It was his conviction that Religion alone would help people in achieving the ideal of universal Brotherhood. And that required, according to the Maharaja, the practice of religion by everyone in his daily life. As he observed, "to realise in a very practical way that as religious men, belonging to different communities, all travelling on their way to God, we ought to put our religion into our daily life, and allow it to permeate all our family, social, civil and industrial pursuits, helping each other, all the while, and letting it be seen that we are, through all our creeds, beginning to realise that we are all the children of one Father, and therefore we ought to behave as brothers toward each other."

As President of the Sanatan Dharma Mahamandal he made extensive tours in the country, addressed meetings and exhorted people to be true to their religlon. Later on, when various causes disturbed the communal harmony of the country he was of the view that the Hindus should work in an organised manner for defencive purposes. About the year 1918 there was an organised movement to discredit the Brahman, endow him with fictitious vices and prove him to be the stumbling block in the way of salvation of the nation. He thus analysed the political factor behind such a crusade. In Madras the Home Rule Movement was started in 1916. There were some who were opposed to it—and wished to set up a counter movement. What did they do was to get hold of a few Non-Brahmans and set up a Non-Brahman Association ostensibly to protect those that were not Brahmans against the Brahmans—but really to

131. Ibid, pp. 254-55. Maharaja Rameshwar Singh suggested the following measures for promotin : and safeguarding the interests of both the parties – the Zamindar and the tenant :—(a) Conducting of agricultural demonstrations for bringing out an increased output ; (b) improvement in the existing system of irrigation ; (c) establishment of Village Arbitration Boards and Local Panchayets and save the tenant from the curses of unnecessary litigation ; (d) opening of Cooperative Banks for mitigating their pecuniary indebtedness and (e) starting of Newspapers to agitate for Zamindars needs and foster a spirit of cooperation between the landlords and tenants.

undermine the influence of the Home Rule movement. Thus in his opinion religion and caste had come to be exploited for political ends.

Maharaja's scheme for the revival of Sanatan Dharma not only envisaged the restoration of honour to Pandits but also the improvement of the lot of the "Depressed classes". He held it to be "the bounden duty of the more advanced amongst us (Hindus) to take them up by the hand and lead them to greater content and culture, and that the national progress would be incomplete if we do not see their progress goes hand in hand with others." But he warned that in their zeal to elevate them they should not breed them feelings of discontent or jealousy. What was, therefore, needed was the dissemination of fundemental truths of religion, side by side with social work to make their condition less sordid and more clean and sanitary. It was of the highest importance that they should be made to feel that they were like others members of the Hindu Society and that they would stand by them and help them in all their endeavours to better themselves. By adopting some such measures, he hoped, that in no distant date India would be able "to organise her own band of Varnashrama missionaries, who will disseminate broadcast the glorious principles of Sanatan Dharma."[132]

The Maharaja was not unmindful of the change of times. Economic questions could not be ignored. So he was of opinion that "Brahmans must first solve the economic question both for himself and the people; and then only he be in a position to devote himself to his other duties. In other words, the Brahmans must first devote themselves to the organising of Industry and Commerce and Agriculture on modern lines which alone can achieve success now and are in these days the only legitimate means by which a nation can get Wealth." This he considered to be quite in keeping with the tradition of the Rishis and Sages who taught mankind the different arts and industries, different trades and professions which, as much as literature and spiritual lore, constitute the civilisation and culture of race. Since the new age demanded the building up of the Hindu Society and Hindu Civilization afresh, it was, in the opinion of the Maharaja, only right that the Brahmans should be taking the lead in the organisation of Arts and Industry as much as of education and spiritual life.

The Maharaja was unhappy that the hold of religion as a strong force on the public mind was becoming meagre and meagre. To remedy this state of affairs he suggested that the Sanatan Dharma Mandal should,

132. Speeches of the Honourable Sir Rameshwar Singh, p. 185.

through booklets, pamphlets and preachers, preach to the masses the sanctity and truth of the religion. Everywhere in the country, town, cities and villages, a branch of Sanatan Dharma Mandal should be established, to celebrate occasionally the Hiudu festivities publicly. He wanted to see the twice-born performing *Sandhya-Vandan* and *Gayatrijapa* daily.[133]

Maharaja Rameshwar Singh was a great patron of learning. His princely donation and unstinted cooperation with Pt. Madan Mohan Malviya for the establishment of the Banaras Hindu University are well known. Besides, he rendered monetary help to a number of other educational, institution. In his own estate Sanskrit education, in particular, received a great impetus. Apart from maintaining several Sanskrit Colleges and schools he created a number of scoolarships for the revival of the studies of the Vedas, Tantras, etc.[134] It was largely to his efforts that the Government of Bihar and Orissa founded a Sanskrit Association at Patna to conduct examination and award of degrees in Sanskrit. The Maharaja was the President of this Association. Like his brother he organised a very rich library at Rajnagar and continued the work of the Collection of Sanskrit manuscripts. The Bihar Research Society also took up this work in which the Maharaja as its patron, took keen interest. It is interesting to note here that it was the result of Maharaja's correspondence with the government regarding the revival and promotions of Sanskrit learning that this search of manuscripts had been entrusted to the Bihar Research Society. The Maharaja was very much interested in his Country's past history and culture. He congratulated the Finance Member of the Government of India for the budget of 1926-27 which included the allotment of a large sum to the Indian Archaeological Department. On this occasion he expressed a hope that "if with the limited resources at its disposal till now, it discovered the relics of ancient civilization at Taxila, Harappa, Mahenjodaro and carried us to the trace of human history in India 5000 years ago, it will with its substantial stability infinance undertake the cxcavations in more right earnest than before, and who knows if these excavations will throw increasing light on the past Indian Civilization which is still shrouded with mystery

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133. To encourage Brahmans to perform Gayatrijapa and Sandhya Vandan the Maharajadhiraj used to give daily allowance to those who bathed early in the morning in the Raj tank at Rajnagar and performed Sandhyavandan, etc. The Maharaja himself used to watch their performance from a distance.

134. For a detailed study of the subject please see my article "Sanskrit Education in Bihar," published in the J. B. R. S., Vol. XLVII, pp. 91-105.

and is a matter of vague conjecture yet. A day may come when the ancient relics will prove that the monumental embodiments of the Civilization which undoubtedly preceded the Egyptian. I trust that the relics will go ta corroborate the glouring description of our Civilization in the Epics and the Puranas and show to the world that our Civilization was not only confined to the present four corners of India but it pervaded the greater part of the known world of those times. The discoveries may open up quite a new chapter in the history of mankind and might radically revolutionise the existing theories of Ethnology."[135]

Maharajadhiraj Rameshwar Singh was, however, not very happy with the existing system of education. He considered the mere teaching of a youth, a smarttering sf the three R's and nothing else in a primary school to be little else than a mere mockery. To him a Godless education was worse than no education at all. The object of education, in his opinion, should be to give the students, after thay have gone through an elementary course of the general subjects, some acquaintance with such practical training as would make them independent of service and properly fit them for an industrial, agricultural or commercial careers and thus enable them to compete successfully with the people of other nations of the world. While this training was meant for the majority of the youngmen a theoretical, scientific and literary training in special subjects should be given only to those few who might be found really fit for it. He was opposed to the theoretical training imparted by the universities to "the indiscriminate crowd." Religious instruction should find due place in the reformed system of education. He was a great admirer of the Gurukul ideals. Addressing a meeting of the Bengal Landholders Association on the lst May, 1921, he observed the following regarding his views on education. "So far as education is concerned, every attempt should be made to reduce the cost by curtailing the paraphernalia that has come to gather round it. Education should aim at the cultivation of simple habits and tastes in consonance with the true life of the people. It should be broad-based on notional culture and national traditions, and should be in tune with national aims and national aspirations."[136]

In his younger days the Maharaja was interested in social reforms. In the seventies of the 19th century a movement had been set on foot by Munshi Peare Lal, a philanthropist, against the prevailing dowry-system among the Hindus. For some years the movement won the support

135. Speeches of the Hon'ble Sir Rameshwar Singh, Maharaja of Darbhanga, p. 247.
136. Ibid., p. 225.



Young Maharajadhiraj Dr. Kameshwara Singh with his younger brother Raja Bahadur Bishweshwar Singh on the occasion of their Yajñopavita.

and sympathy of not only the leaders and Zamindars but also that of the government. A Society with its branches in the several districts had come into existence. Maharaja (then only Raja) Rameshwar Singh was the Honorary Secretary of the Society in his district.

From the beginning of the year 1929 the health of the Maharaja began to deteriorate and he passed away on the 29th June. His death was deeply mourned all over the country. Glowing tributes were paid to his memory by the contemporary newspapers.[137]

Maharajadhiraj Kameshwar Singh

On the death of his father Maharajadhiraj KameshwarSingh ascended on the *gaddi* of Darbhanga Raj on July 15, 1929. He was born on November28,1907. His father took a keen personal interest in his education and upbringing. He was placed under the guidance of Miss Lilian Edgar, a well-known theosophist of her time. A number of other successful teachers were also engaged to impart instruction to him in different branches of learning. But over all was the personal supervision of a religious father who inculcated in him the truths of his religion. All this made him a man of mature thinking at a very early age of his life. He was only 22 years old when he was called upon to assume the reins of the most extensive estate of the Province. As in the past great speculations prevailed on this occasion regarding the fate of the younger brother of the Maharaja. But to the great amazement of all, the Maharaja decided the issue by his generous offer of the Rajnagar circle to his brother, yielding an annual income of seven lacs of rupees. The gesture was indicative of the Maharaja's deep affection for his brother, which the latter was fortunate enough to enjoy throughout his life.

Another event of the Maharaja's life which called for a bold decision on his part was the question of his attending the Round Table Conference at London in response to the invitation of the Government of India. Crossing of a sea by a Hindu is prohibited by the Shastras. And of all the Hindus, the Maharaja, the scion of an illustrious House, the Mithilesh, the leader of the Sanatandharmists had to take a decision in the matter. Already the question had stirred the Brahmans of Mithila. The staunch among them were opposed to Maharaja's visit to London. On the other hand it offered a grand opportunity to the young Maharaja for participation in a conference which was to discuss the various questions affecting the interest of his country. The situation, therefore, dema-

137. For comments on this melancholy event please see the Searchlight of the 24th June, 1929.

nded an extra-ordinary foresight and boldness of decision. And the Maharaja finally decided to attend the conference. No doubt, it created a temporary schism among the Maithila Brahmans, but it had a far-reaching effect so far as the advancement of the community is concerned.

Like his father Maharaja Kameshwar Singh remained the President of the Bihar Landholders Association and guided its policy during the critical years of Agrarian disquet in Bihar. Although the agrarian question had been exciting a good deal of public interest since the closing years of the last century it assumed a serious proportion on the advent of the Provincial autonomy and formation of Congress ministry in some provinces. The hopes and expectations of the tenants were raised high and their impatience made manifestation in the form of serious disturbances. On the other hand these events had produced considerable irritation among the Zamindars and they had begun to think in terms of retaliatory measures. Frequent talks of abolition of the Zamindary system by some congress leaders had made the situation worse. But it may be said to the credit of the Maharaja that his timely intervention stemmed the surging tides of agrarian disputes and an honourable compromise was effected between the Congress party and the Zamindars of Bihar. The Maharaja held a conference of the Zamindars of the Province at Patna on the 15th September, 1937, to acquaint them with the situation and the advisability of concerted action on their part. He, at the same time, appealed to the government to take a realistic view of the situation, created by the tenancy proposals and observed: "All that I desire is that justice should be meted out to the Zamindars as a class. We want the protection of our legitimate rights which are being assailed from various quarters. Wa are being painted in the blackest of colour, which wounds our susceptibilities and offends our sense of selfrespect. Zamindars want recognition of tha principle that patriotism is no monopoly of a particular class or group. The Zamindars have as much right ta serve their motherland as any one else. The government should appreciate this awakening among the Zamindars who constitute a very important section of society, and should take note that they are determined to play their part as zealously as any other section in the cause of the national struggle and to realise the cherished goal. All that they want is fair field and no favour."

As a result of the compromise the Bihar Tenancy Act was amended in such a way as to secure to the tenants the rights of restoration of Bakasht lands. The Zamindars got some relief in the Income-Tax. To remove all misunderstandings Dr. Rajendra Prasad subsequently issued



Lt. Col. Maharajadhiraja Dr. Kameshwar Singh

a statement showing how the tenancy enactments fulfilled the Congress election pledges to the *Kishans*. The question of land reforms again came to the fore on the attainment of *Swarajya* by India. The Zamindary Abolition Bill was passed by the Parliament. But the Maharaja differed with the government on the issue of Zamindari abolition and challenged the Act in the Court. Subsequently, however, in response to the appeals of some national leaders he gave up his opposition. It is, however, said that the promises held out to the Maharaja on that occasion were never fulfilled.

On the whole the Maharaja was on very good terms with the British as well as national government of India. We have already referred to his invitation to the Round Table Conference. As soon as he attained the minimum age prescribed for a legislator he was nominated a member to the Council. But that did not prevent him from expressing his frank opinion, if an occasion so demanded. Thus in a speach in the Council of State he expressed his views on the white paper on Indian Reforms as follows :— "speaking generally, I am sure that what we are going to get is neither the substance of independence, which Mahatma Gandhi wanted, nor the Dominion Status which Indian expected to have. If I may say so, it is going to be a democracy controlled by an autocracy, a novel..................experiment, the result of which is........................ to appraise..when there are so many diverse elements in the field each operating in its own way, I wonder if it could be hoped that anything satisfactory at all could be achieved."

Again on September 4, 1932, while inaugurating the Bihar United Party at Ranchi the Maharaja observed: "We should endeavour to efface the general impression that has been formed in certain quarters that our organisation would be an agency of the British bureaucracy to impede the progress of this country. In fact, I can declare with authority that nothing can be farther from the truth than such misconceptions. All round progess of India is, and must remain, our watchword. Otherwise, how can we claim that the British Parliament should concede to us *Swarajya* or full liberty in the management of our own affairs, which we consider to be our birthright."

During the 1942 movement the Maharaja refused to comply with Government's requisition for a body of horsemen to suppress the great rising. On the contrary he not only rendered financial help to the Congress organisation but also helped several of its leaders individually in times of distress. Deshratna Dr. Rajendra Prasad was a great friend of the Maharaja.

The Maharaja, true to the tradition of the House, was a great patron of learning. Soon after his accession to the *Gaddi* he donated a sum of Rs. 1,20,000 for the creation of the Sir Rameshwar Singh Maithili Chair in the Patna University for research in Maithili. To Banaras Hindu University he donated Rs. 1,50,000. He showed great interests in the promotion of Sanskrit learning. He was the President of the Bihar Sanskrit Association in which capacity he persuaded the Government to amend its constitution in such a way that it might function as an university in the province, so far as Sanskrit education was concerned. He made munificent endowment to the Association to enable it to invite noted Sanskrit Scholars to deliver lectures on the occasion of its convocations. It is popularly called "Mithilesh Mahesh lecturership." The Maharaja was also the President of the Bihar Sanskrit Reorganisation Committee. Besides, there were numerous tols entirely financed by the Raj. The Mithila Research Institute and the Kameshwar Singh Sanskrit University at Darbhanga owe their origin to the munificence of the Maharaja.

The love of Maharaja for Sanskrit was indeed great. But he was not unmindful of the importance of technical and vocational education. At his instance a full course of industrial training was introduced into the curriculum of the Raj High School, Darbhanga. The School was equipped with modern apparatus at considerable cost. To the local C. M. College he donated one lac of rupees for the development of its Science section.

The Maharaja was associated with various educational and cultural institutions. He was Pro-Chancellor of the Kameshwar Singh Sanskrit University, Darbhanga and the Hindu University, Banaras. He was a life Member of the Patna, Bihar and Allahabad Universities. He was also a Member of the Royal Asiatic Society and Vice-Patron of the Bihar Research Society. Besides, he rendered a great service to the cause of Indian Journalism by founding the "Indian Nation" and the "Aryavarta."

The Maharaja made liberal donation to various other works of charity and public utility. He donated Rs. 1,00,000 to the Viceroy's Earthquake Relief Fund. To the king George Memorial (Anti-Tuberculosis) Fund also he donated Rs. 1,00,000. Another lakh went to the Darbhanga District Board for sinking tube-wells in the earthquake affected areas of the district. The Darbhanga orphanage received the Rolls Royce Car used by the Maharani before her death on the 20th October, 1940. On the same occasion the local Goshala received gold worth Rs. 54,000.



Lakshmishwar Villasa Palace
Darbhanga
Donated by the Maharajadhiraj Dr. Kameshwar Singh
To
Kameshwar Singh Darbhanga Sanskrit University
Darbhanga.

The Maharaja was a great builder. Most of the beautiful buildings that we see to-day in the Raj area owe their existence to him. The great earthquake of 1934 had caused widespread destruction of the Raj buildings but credit must go to Maharaja Kameshwara Singh that within a couple of years there were no traces of that calamity. For this exemplary effort on his part the Maharaja was justly praised by the Governor-General of India, Lord Willingdon, when the latter visited Darbhanga on the 30th November, 1935. At a banquet given in his honour by the Maharaja Lord Willingdon observed the following :—

"Here in Darbhanga, we are in the heart of the area afflicted by the terrible earthquake of 1934. As you, sir, have reminded us, it is a little less than two years ago that you, in common, with so many others were, as a result of that terrible catastrophe, without home or shelter. At that time, though I did not come to Darbhanga, I visited other parts of Bihar and saw with my own eyes the widespread destruction and distress. This visit has now enabled me to acquaint myself again at first hand, with one part of the work of reconstruction. Ladies and Gentlemen, I think it is right to say that it is to the lasting credit of our host that confronted with this appalling calamity he truely rose to the occasion. Assuming to the full responsibilities of his position, he immediately declared his intention to completely rebuilding the town, and advice of His Exellency Sir James Sifton who has taken a close personal interest in the Scheme, the Maharajadhiraja immediately directed his whole energies to the task in hand.

The plan of creating a new and better town could not have been carried through on its present lines, if it had not been for the generosity of the Maharajadhiraj in financing the scheme. He began with a splendid contribution of five lakhs of rupees and followed it up with a loan of nine lakhs to finance the Darbhanga Improvement Trust. And I am happy to take this occasion to announce that he has communicated to His Excellency the Governor his generous intention of now supplementing his original gift with a further contribution of two and a half lakhs of rupees. There are many, I am sure, who might be mentioned to-night who are giving you, sir, loyal and devoted assistance in your work of reconstruction, but I think we shall all be agreed that I am fully justified in paying this personal tribute to the Maharajadhiraja who with a generous determination to undertake to the full his responsibility, for the care and well being of his people has spared no effort to restore and improve the amenities of life in this city."

The last scion of this illustrious House (of Darbhanga) thus passed away in all glory on October 1, 1962. He was embodiment of modesty and affability. The affectionate regard in which he held his younger brother,, Raja Bhadur Vishweshwara Singh,[138] is exemplary even for ordinary people. No misfortune perhaps overwhelmed him with grief more than the sad and premature demise of his younger brother in 1959. The Maharajadhiraja died issueless ; but before his death he executed a Will under which he nominated Pt. Lakshmikant Jha, the ex-Chief Justice of Patna High Court as the sole Executor to administer his estate. Under the provision of the Will the late Maharajadhiraja constituted a Trust of more or less his entire property remaining after the administration of the estate and a Board of Trustees was created with Pt. Lakshmikant Jha at its head to carry out the purposes of the Trust. This clearly exhibits not only the Maharaja's high regard for Pt. Jha but also his acumen for spotting out the right person for the right job. Having been aware of the fact that Pt. Jha left his very lucrative practice at the Bar as the Advocate General of this State in 1950 merely to serve the State in a more appropriate position, and had accepted the post of the Chief Justice of the Patna High Court with all the spirit of self-sacrifice in a better cause, the Maharajadhiraja could think of no better person who could administer his estate strictly according to his wishes without any self interest, for the furtherance of the cause of both the Raj and Mithila in general.

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138. RajaBahadur Vishweshwara Singh has three sons, (1) Kumar Shri Jeeveshwara Singh, (2) Kumar Shri Yajñeswara Singh, and (3) Kumar Shri Subheshwara Singh. The third Kumar, Shri Subheshwara Singh is taking keen interest in Social and Cultural works. He is the President of the All India Maithil Mahāsabhā and he is also associated with a number of Cultural Institutions.



Pt. Lakshmi Kant Jha, Executor of the Will of Late Maharajadhiraja Dr. Kameshwar Singh.